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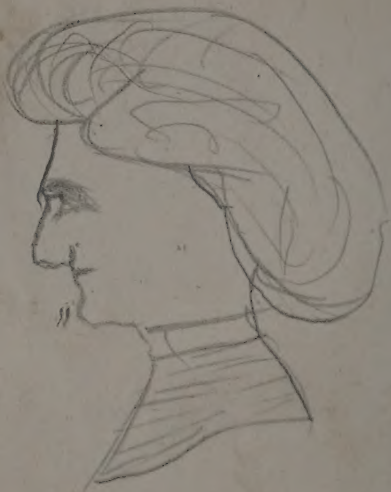

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THE LIFE

OF

SAINT MARGARET,

WITH

THE LIVES OF

SAINT CECILIA, SAINT CATHARINE, SAINT AGNES, SAINT ANGELA, SAINT ELIZABETH, SAINT DYMPNA, AND SAINT WENEFRIDE.

AND THE LIFE OF THE

BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

NEW YORK:
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APPROBATION OF HIS GRACE

THE MOST REV. DR. CULLEN,

Archbishop of Dublin,

ETC., ETC.

"Nothing can be more conducive to the spiritual welfare of the Faithful than to meditate on the virtues, and to consider the example, of the Saints, the chosen friends and servants of Jesus Christ. Hence we are happy to learn that the zealous Catholic publisher, Mr. Duffy, has undertaken to publish a cheap edition of short Lives of Saints, and we beg to recommend this work to the perusal of all faithful Christians.

✠ PAUL CULLEN, ARCHBISHOP, ETC."

"I approve of their republication by Mr. McGee.

✠ JOHN, ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK."

THE LIFE

OF

SAINT MARGARET,

QUEEN OF SCOTLAND.

MARGARET was the granddaughter of Edmond Ironside, and grand niece of Saint Edward the Confessor, whose festival the Church celebrates on the fifth of January.

In order that we may clearly understand her life, let us glance at the state of affairs in England at the time of her birth.

Edmond had been assassinated in 1017, when Canute, king of Denmark, took ad-

vantage of this circumstance, and found means to have himself proclaimed monarch, of all England. He likewise contituted himself guardian of the two sons of Edmond till they should be of age to succeed their father in the kingdom of the Western Saxons. He sent to Sweden secretly the two princes, who were named Edward and Edmond. The Swedish monarch notwithstanding the instructions he had privately received to take away the lives of the two princes, refused to imbrue his hands in innocent blood, and this conduct was rendered still more honorable and noble, by the fact of his having reason to dread the cruelty and power of Canute.

The king of Sweden therefore sent Edward and Edmond to the court of Hungary, where they were received with great honors, and the king of that nation

undertook to educate them both in a manner conformable to their birth.

Edmond, the eldest of the princes, died without posterity. Edward, his brother, married Agatha, sister of the queen of Hungary. She was a most virtuous princess, and gifted with every good quality of head and heart. She became the mother of Edgar, of Christina, who took the religious habit, and of Margaret concerning whom we are going to write. Canute died after a reign brilliant in the eyes of the world, but stained by injustice and ambition. He was succeeded by Harold and Hardicanute, who after a very short reign transmitted the English crown to St. Edward, the kinsman of our Saint.

As soon as this prince was seated on the throne, he invited Edward, the last son of Edmond, to come from Hungary

to England with his children. He received them in London, A. D. 1054, with every possible mark of honor and affection.

Both the king and the prince whom he had recalled from Hungary having died, Edgar naturally succeeded to the throne of St. Edward; but as he was as yet very young, and having been born in a foreign country, these circumstances were made an occasion to exclude him from the crown, and place it on the head of Harold.

The latter pretended that Edward had appointed him to be his successor. William, Duke of Normandy, set up a similar pretension. In consequence of this, he crossed the sea, conquered England, and killed Harold in the celebrated battle which was fought near Hastings, October 14th, 1066. Many of the English people

declared for Edgar, but all to no purpose. This prince was too weak to support himself by force of arms, and he and all his nobility were obliged to receive their vanquisher at London.

At last being constrained to fly from the tyranny of William the Conqueror, he embarked with his sister, Margaret, on board a ship which was cast by a storm on the coast of Scotland. Malcolm, king of that country, gave a warm reception to them both. He was the more anxious to act thus, as he himself had been once in a situation resembling theirs.

William sent to Malcolm, demanding the surrender of the fugitives into his hands, but the generous prince refused to be a party to such black treason. His refusal kindled the fires of war, but the Scotch defied William's troops, and the latter was obliged to sign a treaty of

peace, one of the conditions of which was, that William should act towards Edgar as though he were his friend.

In the midst of all those heart-breaking vicissitudes, Margaret displayed the greatest patience and resignation, and we are now going to narrate some of the countless virtues which won for her the veneration of all Scotland.

Hating worldly vanities and appreciating all its pomps and glories according to their just value, her whole ambition was to render herself agreeable to the King of Heaven, who, while here on earth would not reign over the people, except from the cross of Calvary bedewed with His blood. Mortification, meditation, and prayer, constituted her chief delights. Living for Jesus Christ alone, it was her joy and consolation to commune with Him in the silence of the

tabernacles. Outside the holy temples, she beheld Him in his representatives, the poor, and seized every occasion of ministering to their wants, and assuaging their sorrows.

Malcolm was deeply affected by the contemplation of so much virtue, and began to conceive the greatest esteem for Margaret. He proposed to unite himself to her by the bonds of marriage.

Margaret acquiesced, and was crowned queen of Scotland, A.D. 1070. She was then twenty-four years of age.

Her gentleness, her respectful bearing, her condescension, and other virtues, soon gave her undivided control over her husband's heart. She employed this control, to make religion and justice flourish throughout the whole kingdom. Her examples and conversations caused the king to love and venerate the maxims of

the Gospel, and in the school of Margaret, Malcolm became one of the most virtuous of the kings of Scotland. Charmed by the wisdom of his consort, he committed to her the administration of all his domestic affairs, and consulted her in all public matters regarding the common weal. In the midst of all these occupations, Queen Margaret preserved her recollectedness of soul, and armed herself against all danger of dissipation.

Extreme exactitude in the performance of all her duties, as though the eye of God was upon her alone; the continual exercise of prayer, and the constant habit of mortifying herself, were the principal means that she employed to maintain herself in such a perfect state.

In Scotland, and far away in foreign lands, her prudence was a theme on which all men loved to expatiate. Every one

admired her management of public and private affairs, and there was no one who did not laud her anxiety to make her subjects happy. In a word, nothing could have excelled her wisdom in the discharge of the duties attached to the royal authority.

God did not fail to bless a union that had been sanctified by so many virtues. She had a numerous family, all of whom reflected honor on those from whom they sprang. The queen became the mother of six princes, Edward, Edmond, Edgar, Ethelred, Alexander, David, and of two princesses, Matilda and Maria. The former married Henry I, of England, and the second was the wife of Eustace, count of Boulogne. Edward, Alexander, and David, successively ascended the throne of Scotland. Their respective reigns were signally marked by wisdom,

piety, and valor. David, however, was far more distinguished than his two brothers and of him it has been justly said, that he was the brightest ornament of the Scottish throne.

Under the guidance of so pious a mother, the young princes learned at an early moment, that true nobility and the chief happiness of man are to be found in a virtuous life. Margaret took great heed to guard them, while still mere striplings, against those dangerous shoals, whereon those who are born in courts are too often wrecked. While deeply impressing on their minds the vanity and nothingness of all sublunary things, she depicted virtue to their eyes in all its charms, inspiring them with a holy horror of sin, love of God, and salutary dread of His judgments.

Knowing well that the first impres-

sions made on the souls of the young are hardly ever effaced, and that these impressions are made by those to whom their education is entrusted, she would not allow any to approach them save those whose piety was well established, Thus the preceptors of her children were men influenced by the holiest feelings of religion.

As soon as the princesses, her daughters, were of an age to profit by her examples, she associated them with herself in her spiritual exercises and holy works. She made them the mediums for distributing her alms, and it was with them that she was wont to pour out the incense of her prayers at the foot of God's throne. None but the virtuous were admitted to her court, and virtue was the only recommendation agreeable to her. Want of piety was enough to exclude all persons

from places of trust, for she concluded wisely, that religion was the sole guarantee for the exact performance of duty.

All Scotland had undergone a happy change; holiness and holy men were flourishing every where throughout the realm; the Sundays, the festivals, and the laws of the Church, were faithfully observed; usury, injustice, and dissipation disappeared from every homestead; and peace, morality, and temporal wealth, everywhere abounded.

Does not religion bring every choicest blessing in its train?

Margaret protected learning and encouraged the fine arts, and created various establishments, which wonderfully contributed to the prosperity of the kingdom.

This queen, so majestic, so venerated, and so powerful, was pleased to surround

herself with orphans, old people, poor men and desolate widows. She called them her children ; and, easy of access to them all, she was unremitting in her attentions to each of them. She not only loved the poor, with whom she filled her palace, for in them she beheld the representatives of her Divine Master, Jesus Christ; but she also venerated them, kneeling washed their feet, and fed them with the same meat that was brought to her own royal table.

She took especial delight in visiting the hospitals, and wherever she went the sick and the poor were filled with admiration of her humility and excessive tenderness to them. Even strangers were made the objects of Queen Margaret's bounty and charity. The English who fell into the hands of her husband, were often indebted to her for their de-

liverance from prison. Malcolm, profoundly grateful to God for having given him such a consort, gladly aided her in carrying out all her pious intentions.

Let us now hear Thierry, a monk of Durham, and Queen Margaret's confessor, speaking of her holy life. "The pious queen had hours marked out for all her daily actions. Sleeping little, she always had ample time for her exercises of devotion. Nothing could have exceeded the meagreness of her diet; she ate only to keep herself from dying, and she studiously avoided every thing that could flatter sensuality. Her works were more astonishing than her miracles: for she had also received the gift of miracles. Oh, how I loved the spirit of compunction which God gave her! She possessed it in an eminent degree; when she discoursed with me on the ineffable blessings

of eternal life her words were accompanied with wonderful grace. So great was her fervor on those occasions, that she could not restrain the flood of tears that rushed from her eyes. Such was the tenderness of her devotion, that in witnessing it, I felt myself penetrated by the liveliest compunction. Never was one more recollected in the holy temple."

The same author speaking of Malcolm, states this of him: "He learned from Margaret frequently to spend the night in exercises of piety. It was truly astonishing to see the fervor of this prince while at prayer; he possessed the spirit of compunction, and the gift of tears in a degree far above the condition of a man living in the world."

The queen, says another author, excited the king to works of justice and mercy, and also to the practice of the other

virtues. In all this she succeeded marvellously by an effect of the grace of God. The king was always ready to second her pious intentions. Seeing that Jesus Christ dwelt in the heart of Margaret, he never failed to follow her counsels.

Margaret's instructions had fully convinced Malcolm, that a king, being the father of his people, ought to avoid war as the most terrible of scourges; that the most renowned conquerors were born for the misfortune of the world, and above all for that of the states which they governed; and that their exploits considered with eyes of faith, were nothing but a series of murders and robberies. Nevertheless, the prince knew that his duty as a king, obliged him to be acquainted with the art of war, in order that he might always be prepared

to take up arms for the protection of his people, against the attacks of their enemies.

William Rufus, who had ascended the throne of England in 1087, compelled him to give proofs of his valor. This prince surprised the castle of Alnwick, in Northumberland, and ordered the garrison to be put to the sword.

Malcolm demanded that this place should be restored to him, and when this was denied, he laid siege to it. The English garrison finding itself pressed on all sides, and reduced to the last extremity, feigned a surrender, and proposed that the king himself in person should come to receive the keys of the town; but the soldier who presented them on the point of his lance, seized the moment in which Malcolm was stretching out his hand, and basely dealt

him a stroke in the eyes, of which he died.

Edward, his son, being exasperated, continued the siege, but his valor carried him too far, and he was killed in an assault.

Malcolm's death took place in 1093, and his reign had lasted thirty-three years.

Margaret had need of great resignation to sustain her amid all the misfortunes of which we have to speak; but her virtue did not fail her, and like holy Job she exclaimed: "Lord, thou gavest them to me, and thou hast taken them away from me; may thy name be blessed!"

Margaret was lying sick in her bed, when this intelligence reached her.

We will now let the monk, Thierry, relate all that occurred during her last illness.

"On the day the king was killed,

Margaret appeared to be sad and pensive. It was then she thus addressed those by whom she was surrounded: 'It is probable, that on this day Scotland may have sustained a loss such as never before fell to its lot.'

"Some days afterwards, Edgar, her son, returned from the army. She asked him how were Edward and Malcolm. Edgar, not wishing to augment her sufferings, replied that they were very well. 'I know how it is,' observed Margaret. Then raising her eyes to heaven she addressed this prayer to God—'Almighty God, I thank thee for having sent me this overwhelming affliction in the latest moment of my life. I trust that, with thy mercy, it may serve to purify me from my sins.'

"Margaret had had a revelation, informing her of the time of her death long

before that moment arrived. Having desired to speak to me in private," continues Thierry, "she made a general confession of her whole life. Torrents of tears gushed from her eyes at every word she uttered. So lively was her compunction, that I myself was forced to weep. From time to time, sobs and tears so choked our utterance that neither of us could pronounce a word without great difficulty. She concluded by saying to me what follows:—

"'Farewell, for I shall very soon disappear from the earth. You must soon follow me. I have two favors to ask of you: the first is, that you will remember my poor soul in your prayers and in the Holy Sacrifice, as long as God leaves you here below: the second is, that you will look to my children, and teach them to fear and love God. Promise to grant

me what I ask in the presence of the Lord, who is the only witness of our conversation.'" Feeling that she was about to expire, she redoubled her fervor, and over and over again repeated these words:

"Lord Jesus, who by thy death hast given life to the world, deliver me from evil!"

At length her soul was liberated from the bonds of the body, November 16, 1093, in the forty-seventh year of her age.

She was canonized in 1251, by Pope Innocent IV, and in 1693 Innocent XII fixed her festival on the 10th of June.

The Saint was buried, as she had desired, in the Church of the Holy Trinity, at Dunfermline, near Edinburgh. The pious princess herself was the foundress of the church of this monastery.

At the time of the Reformation, the

Catholics secretly carried off her relics and those of her husband. The greater portion of them was translated to Spain in the reign of Philip the Second, who caused a chapel to be built for their reception in the Escurial palace. They are there to the present day, and on the shrine we read this inscription, "St. Malcolm, king, and St. Margaret, queen."

The head of the Saint was sent to Scotland to queen Mary Stuart; but this princess being obliged to fly to England, a Benedictine friar got possession of the holy relic, and translated it to Antwerp, in 1597. He afterwards gave it to the Scotch Jesuits of Douai, in whose church it was preserved up to the time of the destruction of the religious communities in France.

God is wont to reward the piety of mothers with children who live according

to the holy example shown to them. Those of Margaret were a blessing to all Scotland, and nearly all of them are honored as Saints by the Church.

Matilda or Maud, daughter of Margaret, and wife of Henry I of England, built Christ's Church Hospital, and that of St. Giles in London. Margaret's son, Alexander, erected various churches and monasteries—one in the island of Emona, sacred to St. Colm, which, like that of St. Andrew, he endowed largely. King David who succeeded him, founded four bishoprics, Ross, Brecin, Dunkelden and Dunblane, together with fourteen abbeys, six of which were of the Cistercian order.

PRAYER.

Saint Margaret! obtain for us grace to imitate your virtues, and inspire us with that lively piety and detachment

from the things of earth that rendered you pleasing to God; obtain for us that we may think only of our eternal interests, and thus enjoy here below a foretaste of that heaven where you are now enjoying the beatific vision.

THE LIFE

OF

SAINT CECILIA,

VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

THE LIFE

OF

SAINT CECILIA,

VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

CECILIA occupies a distinguished place amongst the Virgin-Martyrs crowned by the Church, and now following the Lamb in heaven.

Her name was inserted in the Canon of the Mass in the earliest times of Christianity, and it is also found in the most ancient calendars and martyrologies. In the fourth century a church was built in Rome, under the invocation of this saint. This church was rebuilt by Pope

Paschal the First, in the eighth century. At that time search was made in vain for the relics of the saint, and it was generally believed that Astulphus, king of the Lombards, had carried them away when he pillaged Rome in 735. The saint herself appeared, in a dream to Pope Paschal the First, and commanded him to persevere in the search for her precious remains, and he at length found them in the cemetery, called after St. Cecilia herself. The body was found enveloped in cloth of gold tissue, and at her feet were pieces of linen saturated with blood. The Pope translated her body along with those of Saints Valerian, Tiburcius, Maximus, and the holy Popes, St. Urban and St. Lucius, to the church sacred to the name of our Saint.

In 1599, eight centuries after this inhumation, the body of St. Cecilia was dis-

covered in a case of cypress wood, laid in a marble tomb. Pope Clement then caused a magnificent shrine of silver to be made for the holy relics, which still exists.

Let us now briefly relate the history of this saint, which throws great light on the lives and martyrdom of St. Valerian and St. Tiburcius, who suffered along with her.

Saint Cecilia was born at Rome, in the beginning of the third century. She was of a patrician family. It is not ascertained that her parents were Christians, but she indubitably was brought up in the faith. Gifted with wealth, genius, and beauty, the richest and noblest of the Roman youth sought her hand in marriage, but as Cecilia had made a vow of perpetual virginity, she stood aloof from all suitors. God was the only spouse who could satisfy her heart.

Cecilia loved music, and her history informs us that in her retirement from the pomps and transitory amusements of the world, she was wont to sing the praises of God, accompanying herself on various instruments. It was thus she poured forth her soul to God in strains of sweetest melody. She would fain employ herself on earth as the saints are employed in heaven; but all this felicity was fast approaching its term. Her parents disregarding the vow she had made, caused her to marry a young man of noble lineage, named Valerian. Cecilia obeyed her parents, but she was not the less faithful to her vow. God himself inspired her spouse to receive baptism; the sacrament was conferred on him by Pope Urban, whom the persecutors had driven to take shelter in the tombs of the martyrs. For this new Christian, God had already pre-

pared a martyr's crown. Valerian's first act was to labor for the conversion of his brother Tiburtius, and in this holy work he was zealously assisted by Cecilia, who convinced him that the teachings of the Pagans were merely chimerical fables. Soon afterwards Tiburtius received the sacrament of baptism at the hands of Pope St. Urban. Thus did Christianity gain another champion who was soon to descend into the arena, and there win a martyr's palm.

Cecilia, Valerian, and Tiburtius spent their wealth in succoring the Christians whom the Pagans had cast into prison: and they devoted much of their time to burying the bodies of the martyrs. Intelligence of these facts soon reached Almachius, prefect of Rome, who vainly sought to pervert Valerian and Tiburtius. To all his instances they replied thus:—

"Hitherto, Almachius, we have been in deplorable error, adoring gods of wood and stone; but the true God has deigned to enlighten us and bring us to the Christian faith. Sooner or later, oh Almachius, you shall discover the folly of giving adoration to such insensate things." On hearing this, Almachius ordered them to be scourged, and then to be handed over to a priest of Jupiter, who had orders to compel them to offer sacrifice to the statue of this fabulous god. The officer who led them to Jupiter's priest was named Maximus, and God had already begun to touch the heart of this man. Seeing a ray of joy beaming in the faces of the brothers, Maximus inquired how they could be cheerful at such a dreadful moment?

"Hear me, Maximus," replied Tiburtius; "we are going to enter into life eternal.

This temporal state is replete with misery, but it has its term, sooner or later, for all of us. For the faithful, God has prepared a realm of never-ending happiness. The wicked must perish eternally; but Christ has promised to bestow the choicest blessings on those who lay down their lives for him." On the instant Maximus declared his intention of becoming a Christian. That very night he received instructions from Cecilia, and prepared himself for baptism. Next day Tiburtius and Valerian were beheaded, and Maximus witnessing their execution, exclaimed—"Oh, what would I not give to share your triumph, ye blessed martyrs of Jesus Christ."

Almachius ordered him to be tortured, and he expired with eyes fixed on heaven, even while the executioner was causing him the intensest agonies.

Cecilia having now become sole mistress of her husband's property, sold it, and gave the money to the poor, for she knew that the day of her own martyrdom was approaching. Dragged before Almachius, she scorned every proposal made to her. "What," said she, "are not your idols stone and marble? Has not Jesus, the Redeemer, promised eternal life to his faithful followers, and do you think me so stolid as to forfeit that eternal life for a few years of hollow remorseful pleasures?" Upwards of 400 persons who heard these words embraced the Crhistian faith, and were baptized by Pope St. Urban.

Cited once more to the tribunal of Almachius, and being told that it was her duty to obey the emperor, she replied: "God and his holy laws have the first and the most imperative claims to my obedience."

Thereon Almachius ordered her to be shut up in a stove, and when he learned that she was not dead, he sentenced her to be decapitated. Whether it was that the hand of the executioner trembled, or that God meant to glorify the courage of his servant, after receiving two sword-strokes, the head was but half severed. In this state the saint lay weltering in her blood for three days, and, in fact, she implored God to grant her three days of life to console and animate the converts who swarmed round her. At length, on the third day (November 22nd, 232), her soul went to receive its glorious reward. Pope Urban assisted her in her last moments.

Musicians have chosen St. Cecilia for their patroness, for she employed this holy science to celebrate God's praises.

"Music," says Chateaubriand, "has

been taught by angels, and the source of harmony is in heaven. Religion inspires the vestal to pour out strains of melody in the deep stillness of midnight, beneath the tranquil domes. Religion sings at the bedside of the unfortunate—religion inspired the wailings of Jeremias, and the doleful cadences of the Penitential Psalms. Christianity invented the organ, and breathed the breath of song into brass itself; it saved music in the ages of barbarism—nay, by its agency it has converted the wild savages. Religion of peace! thou hast not any code of hatreds or discords—all thy teachings are love and harmony!"

PRAYER.

Holy Cecilia! obtain for us from God ardent zeal, pure love of Him, and perseverance in that Holy Faith for which thou hast laid down thy life.

THE LIFE

OF

SAINT CATHARINE OF SIENNA,

VIRGIN.

THE LIFE

OF

SAINT CATHARINE OF SIENNA

VIRGIN.

[A. D. 1380.]

ST. CATHARINE was born at Sienna, in 1347. Her father, James Benincasa, by trade a dyer, was a virtuous man; and, though blessed with temporal prosperity, always chiefly solicitous to leave to his children a solid inheritance of virtue, by his example, and by deeply instilling into them lessons of piety. Her mother, Lapa, had a particular affection for this daughter above her other chil-

dren; and the accomplishments of mind and body with which she was adorned, made her the darling and delight of all that knew her, and procured her the name of Euphrosyna. She was favored by God with extraordinary graces as soon as she was capable of knowing him. She withdrew very young to a solitude a little out of town, to imitate the lives of the fathers of the desert. Returning after some time to her father's house, she continued to be guided by the same spirit. In her childhood she consecrated her virginity to God by a private vow. Her love of mortification and prayer, and her sentiments of virtue, were such as are not usually found in so tender an age. But God was pleased to put her resolution to a great trial. At twelve years of age, her parents thought of engaging her in the married state. Catharine found

them deaf to her entreaties that she might live single; and therefore redoubled her prayers, watching, and austerities, knowing her protection must be from God alone. Her parents, regarding her inclination to solitude as unsuitable to the life for which they designed her, endeavored to divert her from it, and began to thwart her devotions, depriving her in this view of the little chamber or cell they had till then allowed her. They loaded her with the most distracting employments, and laid on her all the drudgery of the house, as if she had been a person hired into the family for that purpose. The hardest labor, humiliations, contempt, and the insults of her sisters, were to the Saint a subject of joy; and such was her ardent love of crosses, that she embraced them in all shapes with a holy eagerness, and received all railleries with

an admirable sweetness and heroic patience. If any thing grieved her, it was the loss of her solitude. But the Holy Ghost, that interior faithful master, to whom she listened, taught her to make herself another solitude in her heart; where, amidst all her occupations, she considered herself always as alone with God; to whose presence she kept herself no less attentive than if she had no exterior employment to distract her. In that admirable Treatise of God's Providence, which she wrote, she saith: "That our Lord had taught her to build in her soul a private closet, strongly vaulted with the Divine Providence, and to keep herself always close and retired there; he assured her that by this means she could find peace and perpetual repose in her soul, which no storm or tribulation could disturb or interrupt." Her sisters

and other friends persuaded her to join with them in the diversions of the world, alleging that virtue is not an enemy to neatness in dress, or to cheerfulness; under which soft names they endeavored to recommend the dangerous liberties of worldly pastime and vanities. Catharine was according prevailed upon by her sisters to dress in a manner something more genteel; but she soon repented of the compliance, and wept for it during the remainder of her life, as the greatest infidelity she had ever been guilty of to her Heavenly Spouse. The death of her eldest sister, Bonaventura, soon after confirmed her in those sentiments. Her father, edified at her patience and virtue, at length approved and seconded her devotion, and all her pious desires. She liberally assisted the poor, served the sick, and comforted the afflicted and

prisoners. Her chief subsistence was boiled herbs, without either sauce or bread, which last she seldom tasted. She wore a very rough haircloth, and a large iron girdle armed with sharp points; she lay on the ground, and watched much. Humility, obedience, and a denial of her own will, even in her penitential austerities, gave them their true value. She began this course of life before she was fifteen years of age. She was moreover visited with many painful distempers, which she underwent with incredible patience; she had also suffered much from the use of hot baths prescribed her by physicians. Amidst her pains, it was her constant prayer that they might serve for the expiation of her offences, and the purifying of her heart. She long desired, and in 1365, the eighteenth year of her age, (but two years later according to

some writers,) she received the habit of the third Order of St. Dominic. From that time her cell became her paradise, prayer her element, and her mortifications had no longer any restraint. For three years she never spoke to any one but to God and her confessor. Her days and nights were employed in the delightful exercises of contemplation; the fruits whereof were supernatural lights, a most ardent love of God, and zeal for the conversion of sinners. The old serpent, seeing her angelical life, set all his engines at work to assault her virtue. He first filled her imagination with the most filthy representations, and assailed her heart with the basest and most humbling temptations. Afterwards, he spread in her soul such a cloud and darkness that it was the severest trial imaginable. She saw herself a hundred

on the brink of the precipice, but was always supported by an invisible hand. Her arms were fervent prayer, humility, resignation, and confidence in God. By these she persevered victoriously, and was at last delivered from those trials which had only served to purify her heart. Our Savior visiting her after this bitter conflict, she said to him: "Where wast thou, my divine Spouse, whilst I lay in such an abandoned, frightful condition?" "I was with thee," he seemed to reply. "What!" said she, "amidst the filthy abominations with which my soul was infested!" He answered: "They were displeasing and most painful to thee. This conflict therefore was thy merit, and victory over them was owing to my presence." Her ghostly enemy also solicited her to pride, omitting neither violence nor stratagem to seduce

her into this vice; but invincible humility was a buckler to cover her from all his fiery darts. God recompensed her charity to the poor by many miracles, often multiplying provisions in her hands, and enabling her to carry loads of corn, oil, and other necessaries to the poor, which her natural strength could not otherwise have borne. The greatest miracle seemed her patience in bearing the murmurs, and even the reproaches, of these ungrateful and importunate people. Catharine dressed and served an old woman named Tocca, infected to that degree with a leprosy, that the magistrates had ordered her to be removed out of the city, and separated from all others. This poor wretch made, nevertheless, no other return to the tender charity of the saint, than continual bitter complaints and reproaches; which, instead of wearying

out her constancy, only moved the Saint to show her still greater marks of sweetness and humility. Another, whose infectious cancer the Saint for a long time sucked and dressed, published against her the most infamous calumnies ; in which she was seconded by a sister of the convent. Catharine bore in silence the violent persecution they brought upon her, and continued her affectionate services till, by her patience and prayers, she had obtained of God the conversion of both these enemies, which was followed by a retractation of their slanders.

The ardent charity of this holy virgin made her indefatigable in laboring for the conversion of sinners, offering for that end continual tears, prayers, fasts, and other austerities, and thinking nothing difficult or above her strength. All her discourses, actions, and her very silence,

powerfully induced men to the love of virtue, so that no one, according to Pope Pius II, ever approached her who went not away better. Nannes, a powerful turbulent citizen, being brought to our Saint to be reclaimed, all she could say to him to bring him to a right sense of his duty was of no effect: upon which she made a sudden pause in her discourse, to offer up her prayers for him: they were heard that very instant, and an entire change was wrought in the man, to which his tears and other tokens bore evidence. He accordingly became reconciled to all his enemies, and embraced a most penitential life. When he afterwards fell into many temporal calamities, the saint rejoiced at his spiritual advantage under them, saying: "God purged his heart from the poison with which it was infected by its inveterate attachment to

creatures." Nannes gave to the Saint a stately house which he possessed within two miles of the city. This, by the pope's authority, she converted into a nunnery. We omit the miraculous conversion of James Tholomei and his sisters, of Nicholas Tuldo, and many others; particularly of two famous assassins going to die with blasphemies in their mouths, and in transports of rage and despair, who were suddenly converted in their last moments, on the Saint's praying for them, confessed their crimes to a priest with great signs of repentance, and appeared thoroughly resigned to the punishment about to be inflicted on them.

A pestilence laying waste the country, in 1374, Catharine devoted herself to serve the infected, and obtained of God the cure of several; amongst

others, of two holy Dominicans, Raymund of Capua, and Bartholomew of Sienna. The most hardened sinners could not withstand the force of her exhortations to a change of life. Thousands flocked from places at a distance in the country to hear or only to see her, and were brought over by her words or example to the true dispositions of sincere repentance. She undertook a journey to Monte Pulciano to consecrate to God two of her nieces, who there took the religious veil of St. Dominic: and another journey to Pisa, by order of her superiors, at the earnest suit of the citizens. She there restored health to many in body, but to a far greater number in soul. Raymund of Capua and two other Dominicans were commissioned by Pope Gregory XI, then residing at Avignon, to hear the confessions at Sienna of those who were induced

by the saint to enter upon a change of life; these priests were occupied day and night, in hearing the confessions of many who had never confessed before; besides those of others who had acquitted themselves but superficially of that duty. Whilst she was at Pisa, in 1375, the people of Florence and Perugia, with a great part of Tuscany, and even of the ecclesiastical state, entered into a league against the Holy See. The news of this disturbance was delivered to Catharine by Raymund of Capua, and her heart was pierced with the most bitter sorrow on account of these evils, which she had foretold three years before they came to their height. The two furious factions of the Guelphs and Gibellines, which had so disturbed and divided the state of Florence, then a powerful commonwealth, united at last against the Pope, to strip the

Holy See of the lands it possessed in Italy. The disturbance was begun in June, 1373, and a numerous army was set on foot; the word "Liberta," inscribed on the banner of the league, was the signal. Perugia, Bologna, Viterbo, Ancona and other strongholds, soon declared for them. The inhabitants of Arezzo, Lucca, Sienna, and other places, were kept within the bounds of duty by the prayers, letters, and exhortations of St. Catharine, and generously contemned the threats of the Florentines. Pope Gregory XI, residing at Avignon, wrote to the city of Florence, but without success. He therefore sent cardinal Robert of Geneva, his legate, with an army, and laid the diocese of Florence under an interdict. Internal divisions, murders, and all other domestic miseries amongst the Florentines, joined with the

conspiracy of the neighboring states, concurred to open their eyes, and made them sue for pardon. The magistrates sent to Sienna to beg St. Catharine would become their mediatrix. She could not resist their pressing entreaties. Before she arrived at Florence, she was met by the priors or chiefs of the magistrates; and the city left the management of the whole affair to her discretion, with a promise that she should be followed to Avignon by their ambassadors, who should sign and ratify the conditions of reconciliation between the parties at variance, and confirm every thing she had done. The Saint arrived at Avignon on the 18th of June 1376, and was received by the pope and cardinals with great marks of distinction. His Holiness, after a conference with her, in admiration of her prudence and sanctity, said to her: "I desire

nothing but peace. I put the affair entirely into your hands ; only I recommend to you the honor of the Church." But the Florentines sought not peace sincerely, and they continued to carry on secret intrigues to draw all Italy from its obedience to the Holy See. Their ambassadors arrived very late at Avignon, and spoke with so great insolence, that they showed peace was far from being the subject of their errand. God suffered the conclusion of this work to be deferred in punishment of the sins of the Florentines, by which means St. Catharine sanctified herself still more by suffering longer amidst a seditious people.

The Saint had another point no less at heart in her journey to Avignon. Pope John XXII, a Frenchman, born at Cahors, bishop, first of Frejus, then of Avignon, lastly of Porto, on being made

pope in 1314, had fixed his residence at Avignon, where John's successors, Benedict XII, Clement VI, Innocent VI, and Urban V, also resided. Pope Gregory XI, elected in 1370, continued also there. The Romans complained that their bishops had for seventy-four years past forsaken their city, and threatened a schism. Gregory XI had made a secret vow to return to Rome; but not finding this design agreeable to his court, he consulted the holy virgin on this subject, who answered: "Fulfil what you have promised to God." The pope, surprised she should know by revelation what he had never discovered to any person on earth, was immediately determined to carry his good design into execution. The Saint soon after left Avignon. We have several letters written by her to him, to press him to hasten

his return; and he shortly afterwards followed her, leaving Avignon on the 13th of September, in 1376. He overtook the saint at Genoa, where she made a short stay. At Sienna, she continued her former way of life, serving and often curing the sick, converting the most obstinate sinners, and reconciling the most inveterate enemies, more still by her prayers than by her words. Such was her knowledge of heavenly things that certain Italian doctors, out of envy, and with the intent to expose her ignorance, being come to hold a conference with her, departed in confusion and admiration at her interior lights. The same had happened at Avignon some time before, where three prelates, envying her credit with the pope, put to her the most intricate questions on an interior life, and many other subjects; but admiring her

answers to all their difficulties, confessed to the pope they had never seen a soul so enlightened, and so profoundly humble as Catharine. She had many disciples: amongst others, Stephen, son of Conrad, a senator of Sienna. This nobleman was reduced by enemies to the last extremity. Seeing himself on the brink of ruin, he addressed himself to the saint, who, having first made a thorough convert of him from the world and its vanities, by her prayers, miraculously, on a sudden pacified all his persecutors, and calmed their fury. Stephen, from that time, looked upon as dust all that he had formerly most passionately loved and pursued; and he testified, of himself, that by her presence, and much more by her zealous discourses, he always found the divine love vehemently kindled in his breast, and his con-

tempt of all earthly things increased. He became the most fervent amongst her disciples, made a collection of all her words as oracles, would be her secretary to write her letters, and her companion in her journeys to Avignon, Florence, and Rome; and at length, by her advice professed himself a Carthusian monk.—He assisted her at her death, and wrote her life at the request of several princes; having been witness of her great miracles and virtues, and having experienced often in himself her spirit of prophecy, her knowledge of the consciences of others, and her extraordinary light in spiritual things.

St. Catharine wrote to Pope Gregory XI, at Rome, strongly exhorting him to contribute by all means possible to the general peace of Italy. His holiness commissioned her to go to Florence, still

divided and obstinate in its disobedience. She lived some time in that factious place, amidst daily murders and confiscations, in frequent danger of her own life in many ways; in which she always showed herself most undaunted, even when swords were drawn against her. At length she overcame that obstinate people, and brought them to submission, obedience, and peace; though not under Gregory XI, but his successor, Urban VI, as her contemporary historian informs us.

This memorable reconciliation was effected in 1378; after which Catharine hastened to her solitary abode at Sienna, where her occupation, and, we may say, her very nourishment, was holy prayer: in which intercourse with the Almighty, he discovered to her very wonderful mysteries, and bestowed on her a spirit which delivered the truths of salvation in

a manner that astonished her hearers.

Some of her discourses were collected, and compose the treatise On Providence, under her name. Her whole life seemed one continued miracle; but what the servants of God admired most in her was the perpetual strict union of her soul with God. For, though obliged often to converse with different persons on so many different affairs, and transact business of the greatest moment, she was always occupied on God, and absorbed in him. For many years she had accustomed herself to so rigorous an abstinence, that the Blessed Eucharist might be said to be almost the only nourishment which supported her. Once she fasted from Ash-Wednesday till Ascension-day, receiving only the Blessed Eucharist during that whole time.

Many treated her as a hypocrite, and invented all manner of calumnies against

her; but she rejoiced at humiliations, and gloried in the cross of Christ, as much as she dreaded and abhorred praise and applause. In a vision, our Savior is said one day to have presented her with two crowns, one of gold and the other of thorns, bidding her choose which of the two she pleased. She answered: "I desire, O Lord, to live here always conformed to thy Passion, and to find pain and suffering my repose and delight." Then eagerly taking up the crown of thorns, she forcibly pressed it upon her head. The earnest desire and love of humiliations and crosses was nourished in her soul by assiduous meditation on the sufferings of our divine Redeemer. What, above all things, pierced her heart was scandal, chiefly that of the unhappy great schism which followed the death of Gregory XI,

in 1378, when Urban VI was chosen at Rome, and acknowledged there by all the cardinals, though his election was in the beginning overawed by the Roman people, who demanded an Italian pope. Urban's harsh and austere temper alienated from him the affections of the cardinals, several of whom withdrew; and having declared the late election null, chose Clement VII, with whom they retired out of Italy, and resided at Avignon. Our saint, not content to spend herself in floods of tears, weeping before God for these evils of his church, wrote the strongest and most pathetic letters to those cardinals who had first acknowledged Urban, and afterwards elected another; pressing them to return to their lawful pastor, and acknowledge Urban's title. She wrote also to several countries and princes in his favor, and

to Urban himself, exhorting him to bear up cheerfully under the troubles he found himself involved in, and to abate somewhat of a temper that had made him so many enemies, and mollify that rigidness of disposition which had driven the world from him, and still kept a very considerable part of Christendom from acknowledging him. The pope listened to her, sent for her to Rome, followed her directions, and designed to send her with St. Catharine of Sweden to Jane, Queen of Sicily, who had sided with Clement. Our saint grieved to see this occasion of martydom snatched from her, when the journey was laid aside on account of the dangers that were foreseen to attend it. She wrote, however, to queen Jane, likewise two letters full of holy fire to the king of France, also letters to the king of Hungary and others,

to exhort them to renounce the schism.

We pass over the ecstacies and other wonderful favors this virgin received from heaven, and the innumerable miracles God wrought by her means. She has left us, besides the example of her life, six treatises in form of a dialogue, a discourse on the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin, and three hundred and sixty-four letters, which show that she had a superior genius, and wrote perfectly well. Whilst she was laboring to extend the obedience of the true pope, Urban VI, her infirmities and pains increasing, she died at Rome on the 29th of April, in 1380, being thirty-three years old. She was buried in the church of the Minerva, where her body is still kept under an altar. Her skull is in the Dominican church at Sienna, in which city are shown her house, her instruments

of penance, and other relics. She was canonized by Pope Pius II, in 1461. Urban VIII transferred her festival to the 30th of April.

When we read the lives of the saints, and consider the wonderful graces with which God enriched them, we admire their happiness in being so highly favored by Him, and say to ourselves that their labors and sufferings bore no proportion to the sweetness of heavenly peace and love with which their souls were replenished, and the spiritual joys and consolations which were a present superabundant recompense and support. But it was in the victory over their passions, in the fervor of their charity, and in the perfection of their humility, patience, and meekness, that their virtue and their happiness chiefly consisted. Nor are we to imagine that God raised them to

these sublime graces without their assiduous application to the practice both of exterior and interior mortification, especially of the latter. Self-denial prepared them for this state of perfect virtue, and supported them in it. What a pity is it to hear persons talk of sublime virtue, and to see them pretend to aspire after it, without having studied in earnest to die to themselves. Without this condition, all their fine discourses are mere speculation, and their endeavors fruitless.

PRAYER

Hear us, oh God, appealing to thee through the intercession of thy blessed servant Catharine, and grant that we may be enabled to imitate the virtues which render her so pleasing to thee.

THE LIFE
OF
SAINT AGNES.

SAINT AUGUSTINE remarks that the name of Agnes signifies in Greek, "*the chaste:*" our Saint fully justified the signification of her name.

"All the people," says St. Jerome, "united in celebrating the praises of St. Agnes, who triumphed over the corruptions of her times, and crowned the glory of chastity by that of martyrdom."

Rome was the theatre of the combats and of the triumphs of this generous Christian. According to St. Augustine and St. Ambrose, she was about thirteen or fourteen years of age when she suffered. It was about the beginning of the

fourth century, a short time after the commencement of Diocletian's persecution, that she won the martyr's palm.

The wealth and beauty of Agnes induced many of the Roman nobility to seek her hand in marriage; but she constantly replied that she had consecrated herself to a celestial spouse invisible to men. Failing in their suit, they denounced her to the governor as a Christian. The latter tried every means to pervert her to paganism, but all in vain, for within her delicate frame she had an intrepid soul that longed for martyrdom. To terrify her they lit a great fire in her presence, and collected full in her view all the horrid instruments of torture. They then dragged the intrepid virgin before the idols, "but," says St. Ambrose, "far from burning incense she raised her hand only to make the sign of the cross."

The infuriated governor then sent her to an obscene place, where her purity was exposed to every sort of insult. "Ah," said Agnes, "Jesus Christ is too jealous of the chastity of his spouses to suffer them to be deprived of it; He Himself is the guardian of it. You may shed my blood, but this body consecrated to Jesus, you cannot profane it." This prediction was realized. Heaven visibly protected this blessed maiden. Thus did it often please God to manifest his esteem for the virtue of purity, up to that period unknown to the world. "Exposing the Christian virgins thus," writes Tertullian to the pagans, "you clearly see that every sort of death is more tolerable to a Christian than the loss of her purity; but what has been the result? you only multiply the converts to the faith."

Agnes was afterwards condemned to

die by the headsman's axe. Having proclaimed that she would never abjure the faith of her Lord, she bowed her head and consummated her glorious sacrifice. Those who witnessed the bloody spectacle were astounded and filled with admiration for a religion whose dearest hopes lie far beyond the grave. Her body was interred near the walls of Rome, and Constantine the Great erected a church over her tomb. Her name is found in the Canon of the Mass. St. Ambrose and St. Augustine have composed panegyrics of our Saint. St. Martin of Tours cherished a particular devotion for her. Thomas a Kempis honored her as his principal patroness, and in some of his works speaks of the many miracles wrought through her intercession.

THE LIFE

OF

SAINT ANGELA.

THE LIFE

OF

SAINT ANGELA.

GOD has been often pleased to operate His grandest works by the agency of instruments which appear to man to be entirely unsuited to such great ends. What immense benefits have accrued to religion and society, through the instrumentality of the Ursuline nuns! Devoted by their institute to the Christian education of the youth of their own sex, their Order has now flourished for fully three centuries throughout all the Catholic Kingdoms.

To a poor girl without credit or

authority, but inflamed with the love of God, and filled with zeal for the salvation of her kind, we are indebted for these ineffable benefits. This girl was called Angela Merici. She was born in Italy at Dezensano, a town in the States of Venice, in the diocess of Verona, near the lake of Garda, March 21st, of the year 1470. Her father and mother were distinguished in their social position, but still more distinguished were they for their exalted piety. Their first and chief care was to train up their child in the respect and fear of God.

Angela's pious disposition greatly facilitated her early education. From her tenderest infancy she was grave and modest, loving secluded life, prayer, and the meditation of heavenly things. The ordinary amusements of children afforded her no pleasure. Religion, and all that

pertained to it, constituted her delight.

The father and mother congratulated themselves on the piety of their child, and blessed the Lord for it. Nevertheless, they did not live to witness the full development of those seeds of virtue, which they had planted in their infant's heart. They were taken from this world before their child had grown to girlhood.

Angela, deprived of her parents, was sent to Salo, to her maternal uncle, with one of her sisters. This sister older than herself, partook of her religious tastes. Their uncle, a pious and wealthy man, never interfered with their holy occupations, but, on the contrary, approved highly of their designs and acts. The two girls longed for a perfect state of life ; and they therefore resolved to quit the busy city, and spend the remainder of their lives in solitude. At the time appointed

for carrying out their designs, they withdrew, without telling any one, to a secluded cavern, some distance from Salo.

Their uncle, alarmed at not finding them returning at the accustomed hour, was greatly disheartened, and he then set out in search of them. He at last found them in the solitude they had selected. After making some observations on what he deemed an imprudent step at such an early moment of their lives, he brought them home to his house, where they enjoyed the amplest liberty to follow the impulses of their devotion.

Taking advantage of this kind concession, they converted their home into a sort of hermitage, where they held unbroken communion with God. The fame of their austere life and fervor was soon diffused abroad through the city, where they became objects of the greatest admiration.

But God, who takes delight in testing virtue, was pleased, in his inscrutable designs, to strew thorns in the path of the two sisters. Jealous of the possession of our hearts, He wishes to have them entirely His own, and even at the risk of causing them to suffer, He insensibly breaks all the bonds that would alienate them from Him.

Angela had lost her father and mother, and this privation filled her with deep and sincerest grief. Now, only one sister was left to partake of her pious sentiments, and this dear one was taken from her by implacable death.

This second stroke was far more terrible for Angela than the first, or rather it revived all the grief consequent on the first, in sending an additional affliction on her. The poor young girl now found herself bereft of all her family joys.

Nevertheless, although but fifteen years of age, she simply said to those who came to console her, "After all, who am I, or why should I murmur at the decrees of God? My sister belongs to Him, why therefore should He not take her to Himself? Ah! may His name be blessed for evermore."

Meanwhile Angela's grief was soon assuaged by the assurances she received of her sister's eternal salvation. One day while meditating on the felicity of the saints, she besought God to reveal to her if He had taken her sister into his everlasting tabernacles. Her prayer was heard. Suddenly a dazzling light shone round about her; and she beheld the Virgin Mary, surrounded by hosts of angels, and at her side that dear sister for whom she had been weeping. "Continue," said the sister to her, "to walk perse-

veringly in the ways of perfection, and thou shalt one day share with me the delights of eternal beatitude."

This apparition and revelation from Heaven, redoubled the zeal and ardor of Angela. There was no sacrifice that she was not prepared to make, in order to reach the exalted glory that had been promised to her.

The Third Order of St. Francis had been established at Salo, and our young saint, desiring to have another additional mean of sanctification, gladly embraced it. Along with the habit, she put on the spirit of its holy and humble founder. Angela's apparel, chamber, and furniture were poor: she lived on bread, water, and lettuces. On Christmas and Easter-day, she added a little wine; but she abstained from all food every Monday in Lent. Her garments were made of the coarsest sack-

cloth. Her bed was the hard floor, and taking but scanty rest, she devoted the greater part of night to prayer. Desiring in every particular to imitate Jesus Christ, she wished to live on alms, and all her uncle's remonstrances on this subject could not turn her from her determination.

The virtues of our Saint excited the envy of the devil, who, to deceive her, manifested himself to her under the appearance of an angel; but the humble servant of the Lord recognized the malice of the tempter. She bowed her forehead to the ground, and exclaimed that her numerous sins rendered her unworthy of being visited by the angels of God. This act of humility put the devil to flight; but although victorious, Angela believed it to be absolutely necessary to arm herself still more

strongly against this adversary, by redoubling the mortifications of her body and the number of her pious practices.

God never suffers himself to be excelled in liberality. Angela was generous, and so was God to his servant by the abundance of spiritual treasures which he poured into her soul. Her daily communions now became to her a source of ineffable delights, her devotion to the august Sacrament of the Altar was so ardent, that she spent entire hours on her knees before the tabernacles of the adorable Eucharist; and often after having passed whole days thus, she would get up at night to return to the same devout practice. Then while her hands were crossed on her bosom, and whilst the fire of divine charity burned in her soul, she would ever and anon give utter-

ance to such tender sentiments as these; "Sacrament of my God, Jesus, my life and my love, oh how I love to be near thee..Oh what could my heart be without thee!....How sweet and tender are the sentiments thou kindlest in my soul! How kindly hast thou visited me in my sorrows, changing them into transports of joy! When in thy presence, oh how insignificant is the whole outward world! Thou, my Jesus, art all sufficient for me!—Ah, chase from my memory the grand productions of art, the sumptous dwellings of the great—I desire no other object for my love or admiration than this great work of my God. Oh, my Jesus! thou containest all good, thou art all good. Great God, hear my prayers. Let me die before thy tabernacel, drowned in my tears" And the flying hours that bring the day-dawn in their

train, found her still before the Adorable Object so dear to her heart.

The death of her uncle determined Angela to return to Dezensano, her native town, but the change of locality nowise altered her pursuits, and in this new asylum she was as edifying as at Salo.

At Dezensano there was a sisterhood of the Third Order of St. Francis, and Angela now united herself to them. Her companions soon learned to admire her virtues, her humility, her spirit of mortification, her charity and her zeal for the salvation of her neighbor.

Often would she converse with them on the desire that she entertained to consecrate herself to the Christian instruction of young girls. A mysterious vision with which God favored her, served in great measure to augment this desire, and finally determined her to undertake

this good work. One day while at prayer, she saw before her a mysterious ladder based on the earth and reaching into heaven; a choir of angels sending forth harmonious strains from divers instruments, floated around and over her, while a countless crowd of young maidens, their heads crowned with diamond crowns, alternately ascended and descended the ladder. Absorbed in the contemplation of this wonder, she heard a voice saying to her; "Thou knowest, Angela, that God hath sent thee this vision that thou mayst learn to establish a community of chosen virgins: such is the will of God."

The humble servant of God after many hesitations, and conferences with her spiritual guide, made her companions aware of the vision that she had had, and at last induced them to agree with her in her design. They therefore collected

together in their house the little children of Dezensano, and began to teach them the Christian doctrine. The results of this experiment were marvellous. The scholars became singularly remarkable for their modesty; and even public morality began to ameliorate sensibly. Angela's reputation was soon widely diffused, and she had to revisit Brescia, the capital of the province, where her virtues were regarded with the greatest respect.

Angela had been for a long time projecting some holy pilgrimages; and now she hastened to Mantua in order to have a conference with sister Hossana d'Andreasie, a religious of the Order of Penance of St. Dominic, and already celebrated for the lustre of her virtues. Thence our Saint set out for Venice where she courageously embarked on the long and perilous voyage to Palestine in order to visit

the holy places where Jesus Christ suffered for the salvation of the human race. They disembarked in the island of Candia, where Angela became totally deprived of the faculty of sight. Thus bereft of the consolation which she thought was in reserve for her, our saint did not lose courage, but persevered in the voyage. Though she could not see with bodily eyes the spots sanctified by the Redeemer's footmarks, she would fain tread that holy soil, and cause herself to be led by the hand through all the localities identified with the history of our Savior. Oh! who could describe the throbbings of her heart when she descended into the Lord's sepulchre, or visited the place where He expired on the cross! What great memories crowd over that land—the land of the Manger and of Calvary!

"Between the valley of the Jordan

and the plains of Idumea," says Chateaubriand, "stretches out a chain of mountains which commences in the fertile fields of Galilee and loses itself in the sands of the Yemen. In the centre of these mountains there is an arid basin locked in on all sides by yellow rocky peaks; these peaks open only on the east, and give glimpses of the Dead Sea and the distant mountains of Arabia. In the midst of these stony landscapes, on a broken and inclining site, within the circuit of a wall ages ago battered by military engines, and strengthened by tottering towers, the eye rests on vast ruins. Straggling cypresses, and some masses of Arabic masonry like whitened sepulchres, are scattered over this heap of ruins: such is sad Jerusalem.

"At first sight of these desolate regions a great sadness seizes the heart. But

passing from solitude to solitude, while the horizon expands before you, this sadness vanishes by degrees. The traveller experiences a secret terror, which far from casting down the soul, gives it courage, and elevates it. Wonderful sights meet the eye on this soil, sanctified by miracles. The burning sky, the impetuous eagle, the humble hyssop, the proud cedars, the sterile fig tree, all the poetry, all the pictures of the Scripture are there. Every name reveals a mystery, every grotto speaks of the future, every mountain-peak echoes the accents of prophets. God himself has spoken on these spots. The dried-up torrents, the rent rocks, the gaping tombs attest this prodigy; the desert seems dumb from terror, and one is inclined to think that it has not dared to break the silence since the time when it heard the voice of the Eternal."

Angela did not tarry long in Jerusalem. She soon afterwards set sail for Italy, and in Candia where she lost her sight, she recovered it while kneeling before an image of Jesus Christ crucified. From Candia she proceeded to Italy. During this voyage they encountered a terrible tempest, and two vessels of the convoy were entirely wrecked. The ship in which Angela sailed reached Venice in safety, after having struggled against the storm for fully nine days.

Our Saint remained in Venice with the sisterhood of the Holy Sepulchre, till she retrieved her shattered health. The fame of her sanctity attracted the most distinguished of the citizens to her, and many of them urged her to place herself at the head of the religious establishments then flourishing in the city of the Doges.

The humble maiden declined this flat-

tering proposal, and in order to escape the honors the people intended to confer on her, she left the city secretly, and arrived in Brescia, November 24, 1524.

The Jubilee of 1525 had commenced, and Angela proceeded to Rome, to partake of the great spiritual favors granted on such a grand occasion. Pope Clement VII then occupied the chair of St Peter, and he not only admitted Angela to an audience, but gave her a most cordial reception.

Intimately convinced of the eminent merits of our Saint, his Holiness deemed it his duty to persuade her to fix her abode at Rome, and thus take charge of the various houses devoted to works of mercy. But Angela never forgot the vision which intimated that she was to be foundress of an Order, and she therefore respectfully excused herself to the Pontiff. After

receiving his benediction and sanction, she returned to Brescia.

In the meanwhile, Italy was desolated by wars, which forced our Saint to leave Brescia; but as soon as peace returned, she laid the foundations of her celebrated Order. She did nothing without weighing well every circumstance that might advance or retard her project; and indeed, her great humility caused her to entertain doubts of its success.

It was on the 25th November, 1535, that Angela formed her little community of twenty-seven virgins. She drew up for them a short rule, divided into twelve chapters. She did not require any dowry with her postulants, in order that they might have no difficulty in joining her institute. The duties she imposed on them did not oblige them to live in common, but they were, nevertheless, admira-

bly suited to carrying out her holy intentions.

Motived by the holiest spirit of humility, and despising all earthly fame, our Saint, to conceal her own name, called her new Institute "Saint Ursula's." But although she satisfied her innate modesty by excluding her own name, she was greatly mortified nevertheless when she heard the people, all of whom were edified by the young community, styling it the "*Holy Company*," and the "Divine Order." Angela herself foretold that her Institute should continue to flourish for ever, as it had for its patroness and protectress, that illustrious Saint who led so many virgins to martyrdom.

As the number of the sisters increased daily, it became necessary to elect a superioress to govern the rising com-

munity, and for this purpose Angela assembled all its members. Their choice was soon fixed, and they all with one accord selected her to govern them. It was with great repugnance that she accepted this dignity; but she soon proved how worthy she was of her position. Her sweetness, her goodness, her evenness of temper, won her the hearts of all her children, and they deemed themselves blessed under her guidance. As soon as her Institute had been sanctioned by the Bishop of Brescia, Angela would gladly have retired from the position of superior; and so desirous was she of this that she alleged her age and infirmities, hoping that the bishop would release her from this grave responsibility. The instances and tears of her community, however, compelled her to continue in her place. The bishop commanded her to

retain her authority, and it was in obedience to him that she continued to hold the appointment. Were it not for this, all the instances of her community must have been of no avail.

Her submission was soon followed by infirm health, for she fell sick about the beginning of January, 1540; and from that very moment she predicted that the time of her decease was not far off. Her first care, now that she found herself in danger, was to assemble the community, and give the sisterhood salutary instructions, replete with wisdom. Thenceforth, her only occupation was to testify to her Divine Master her burning desire of being united to Him. Feeling her strength beginning to fail, she received the Sacraments of the Church with admirable fervor. Even to her latest gasp she did not cease to make acts of faith and hope.

At length, rich in every sort of Christian merits, aged about seventy years, consumed by the most ardent charity, and consoled with all the comforts that the Church provides for its children, Angela peacefully breathed her last sigh, and presented to the Divine Spouse her unsullied baptismal garment, January 27, 1540.

"For a just soul," says Massillon, "death is something sweet and desirable. Arrived at that happy moment, it regrets not a world which it always regarded as a mere vapor, as a thing that it had never loved. Then, indeed, the eyes willingly close on all the vain spectacles which the earth presents of a moment. Joyfully does the soul feel the mortal body, theretofore the matter of all its temptations, and the source of all its weaknesses, putting on immortality. It

regrets nothing on the earth, where it leaves nothing, and whence the heart like the spirit takes its flight. It grieves not at being taken away in the midst of its course, nor does it repine at leaving the world while youth is only flourishing. On the contrary, it thanks its liberator for having shortened its trials with its years, and for having demanded only half of its debt as the purchase money of an eternity—for having consummated its sacrifice in a brief interval, lest a long sojourn here below might waste and corrupt the heart. Then, indeed, the mortifications and austerities, which cost the weakness of the flesh so much, fill the soul with the most consolatory reflection; it sees every thing vanish, save what it has done for God; it beholds itself abandoned by property, kindred, friends,and dignities, by every

thing save its works; but it is sustained by transports of joy, when remembering that it did not place its confidence in the favor of princes, in the children of men, in the illusive hopes of fortune, in mere perishable things, but in the Lord who remaineth for ever and ever, and in whose bosom it shall find that peace and felicity which creatures cannot give. Thus tranquil, as to all that regards the past, despising the present, delighted at the idea of reaching its longed-for goal, beholding the bosom of Abraham open to receive it, and the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the father holding out the crown of immortality, it falls asleep in the Lord, and is carried by blessed spirits to the dwelling of the Saints, and returns to the place whence it came."

It would difficult to describe the

sensation produced by Angela's death in the city of Brescia, where she had been long venerated as a saint, and above all, in that blessed asylum she had founded. The sisterhood wept for her as their adoptive mother, their guide and their mistress. A holy rivalry arose between the Chapter of the Cathedral of Brescia, and the regular canons of saint Affra (her parish) about the possession of her body. Owing to this rivalry, her mortal remains lay thirty days unburied, and yet corruption touched her not, and all her limbs were as pliant as if she had not died.

At last, she was interred in the church of St. Affra, near the grand altar, in a tomb covered with a slab of black marble, which was inscribed with her eulogies: Many miracles were wrought at her tomb, which was visited by vast multitudes from all quarters.

St. Charles Borromeo occupied himself much in the business of her Beatification; but death prevented him from carrying it into effect. After many processes commenced and interrupted by various circumstances, Angela was inscribed amongst the number of the Beatified, April 30, 1768, by Pope Clement XIII. Finally, after three cures, miraculously wrought by her intercession, and proven beyond all doubt, Pope Pius VI canonized her solemnly, May 24, 1807.

At the time of Angela's translation from this life, her community was composed of a hundred and fifty virgins, and nine widows. In 1544, Paul III approved her institute; and in 1572, Gregory XIII raised it to the dignity of a religious order, under the rule of St. Augustine, and bound its inmates to the cloister. St. Charles Borromeo, the

illustrious Archbishop of Milan, gave especial encouragement to this institute; and after seeing the great amount of good it had effected in Brescia, he established a similar community at Milan. In the following century, the Order of St. Ursula made most rapid progess in both hemispheres. The first establishment of this order in France was founded at Paris in 1611, by Magdalene Lhuilier. Five years before, Mother Anne de Saintonge, of Dijon, had already established religious of this order in Franche-Comté, which was not then a part of France, but with this difference, that they were not bound to exact cloister life.

The institute of the Ursulines is composed of fourteen congregations, which have different constitutions, but all of which propose to themselves the same

object, the Christian education of their own sex. The houses of this order were very numerous in France at the time of the revolution; they then exceeded three hundred, and the single province of Bretagne counted thirty of them.—Amongst the most celebrated of them all, was that of the St. James, at Paris, in which the far-famed Madame de Maintenon was a pensioner. Many of them have been re-established in various regions of France. The Order has houses in Brazil, Canada, the United States, and Ireland. That of Quebec was founded in 1639.

Happy are the young who are consigned to the guidance of the pure and holy!

How blessed are the hands of those holy virgins who lead infancy in the paths of righteousness. How noble the vocation that has been given to them

from on high! Blessed for ever be those mansions which are the asylums of innocence, where our Christian families can secure for their offspring all the benefits of Christian enlightenment!

PRAYER.

Great Saint! who lived only for the glory of God, and who, by a pious and durable institution desired to perpetuate the zeal which inflamed you for your kind! Oh, Virgin! the model and the lover of virgins! St. Angela! continue to protect those who invoke your powerful intercession. Look down on us from heaven, and implore for us the grace of that God who has loved and crowned you in his everlasting kingdom.

THE LIFE

OF

SAINT ELIZABETH,

OF HUNGARY,

WIDOW.

THE LIFE

OF

SAINT ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY,

WIDOW.

(A. D. 1251.)

ELIZABETH was the daughter of Andrew II, King of Hungary. Her mother was Queen Gertrude, daughter of the Duke of Carinthia. Elizabeth was born in the year, 1207. Her august parents were distinguished for their great piety, and great was their joy on seeing their child, even in her infantile years, giving herself, as it were naturally, to the things of God, preferring them to every other engagement, and centering all her delights in prayer, almsgiving, retirement, and re-

collectedness. Such was the precocious piety that stamped the character of the child, and, as it were, presaged the future glory of the young Hungarian princes.

The Landgrave or Duke of Thuringia, one of the most powerful of the princes of Germany, having heard of Elizabeth, and having learned how heavenly was the character of this child, then only four years old, determined that she should, one day, be the spouse of his young son, Louis.

Ambassadors were sent to the Court of Hungary, and the marriage of the young princess, Elizabeth, and the youthful Louis, was arranged. In order to give more solidity to this engagement, the contracting parties agreed that little Elizabeth should be sent immediately to the Court of Thuringia.

She was consigned to the ambassadors in a massive silver cradle; and as soon as

they reached the Landgrave's Court, they proceeded to celebrate the espousals of Elizabeth and Louis, who had then completed his eleventh year. From this moment Elizabeth never quitted her betrothed, whom she called her brother—young Louis called her his sister; even after their marriage they were accustomed to address each other in these endearing appellations.

The care of Elizabeth's education was entrusted to a noble lady, eminently qualified for this responsible undertaking.

Two years after her arrival in the Court of Thuringia, Elizabeth was informed of the death of Queen Gertrude, her mother, the remembrance of whom caused her to shed many and many a tear. Three years afterwards, Elizabeth witnessed the death of Landgrave Her-

mann, the father of her betrothed. This, indeed, was a serious loss to her, for this prince, who was a truly religous man, always smiled complacently on the holy acts of his daughter-in-law, and never opposed any of the devotional practices in which she was wont to indulge. After his death, she was wholly at the mercy of Agnes, her sister-in-law, who annoyed her very much. Sophia, her mother-in-law, a woman singularly attached to pageantries and worldly amusements, encouraged Agnes to thwart and cross young Elizabeth. The great devotion of the latter, and her profound contempt for all the vanities so much loved by people of her rank, excited their extremest displeasure. Agnes, in fact, blushed to think that she should be educated with a person who, according to her uncharitable remarks, was fitter to be a tire-woman than a princess.

Duke Louis had succeeded his father, but he was still dependent on the Duchess Sophia, his mother. Furthermore, he was very often absent from the Court, and this period was employed by Sophia and Agnes in tormenting poor Elizabeth.

One day—it was the festival of the Assumption—Agnes and Elizabeth received orders to dress themselves in their most sumptuous robes, and to wear their golden crowns, as the Duchess required them to accompany her to the Church of Eisenach, where she was going to hear Mass. Elizabeth obeyed; but on entering the house of God, she removed her crown. The princess Sophia, observing this act, reproached her, and asked her imperiously why she did so? "Madam," replied Elizabeth, with profound humility, "ought I wear a golden diadem in a place where I behold Jesus Christ

crowned with thorns?" Agnes and Sophia were struck dumb with indignation, for so much humility condemned their pride. Elizabeth, however, gave herself no uneasiness, but prostrating herself, prayed with her wonted fervor.

This event served only to augment Elizabeth's torments. "Do not imagine that Duke Louis will ever marry you;" such was the insulting language habitually employed by Agnes; "Go and become a waiting-woman, for you are not fit to be the wife of a prince." Nevertheless, poor Elizabeth bore all these injuries and outrages with patience, and when Louis returned to the Court, he did not fail to evince the sincerest love and respect for the virtues of his betrothed, despite the sarcasms of his mother and sister. He consoled her in secret, he encouraged her in the practices of humility

and evangelical mortification, and, at the same time, left no doubt on her mind as to his unshaken constancy and eternal attachment.

All their persecutions tended to make Elizabeth entertain, if possible, a still more profound contempt for the pomps and pleasures of earth. All these trials she had to encounter on the road wherein Jesus Christ destined her to walk, taught her to entertain patience, humility, gentleness, and charity. She never failed to evince all these heavenly dispositions of soul and body for her cruel persecutors. Consoled by the benedictions of heaven, she almost disregarded all the thorns wherewith her path was strewn. Her chief happiness was to remain within her chapel or oratory, and there to pass many and many an hour in prayer. Her delight was to minister comfort to the poor,

and to dress the wounds of the suffering, no matter how loathsome they might be. Even in her leisure moments, in the time usually allotted to recreation, any one might have perceived how sedulous she proved herself in cultivating and practising evangelical humility and mortification.

A life like this, so totally opposed to luxury and the fatal etiquette attached to the high place which she was destined one day to occupy, excited the deadliest contempt and aversion of Sophia, and her daughter Agnes. The very courtiers labored with all their ingenuity to heap contempt on Elizabeth. Thus spake they: "She is not worthy of an alliance with the Landgrave : moreover, the prince does not love her. She ought, therefore, return into Hungary, and there marry some civilian of gentle blood."

But, at length, after long and continual absence, occasioned by his education, Duke Louis returned to the Court of his royal ancestors. He was an accomplished prince, and in every way prepared to act a great part in the theatre of the world; but that which rendered him still more estimable and worthy of Elizabeth was his great purity of morals, and his heart-felt love of piety. The wonderful virtues of Elizabeth, then only fourteen years of age, had made a deep and lasting impression on his soul. He took good care to put an end to the persecutions she had to endure for such a lengthened period, and, at the same time, declared his determination to marry the blessed girl whom he called his sister. Her persecutors were now obliged to mask their rage, and the marriage of Louis and Elizabeth was solemnized with all regal magnificence.

Even after her marriage, the new Duchess did not, in the least degree, diminish her pious austerities; and the devout prince, her husband, far from finding fault with them, seemed rather disposed to encourage them. All the time which Elizabeth did not spend in prayer was devoted to works of charity, or manual labor, and this labor was to spin wool for the clothing of the poor.

Always united to God, she seemed to perform every act as though she was the only object of His watchfulness. Furthermore, Elizabeth possessed the grand gift of being able to pray almost incessantly.

Her austerities surpassed those of the ancient solitaries. Her aversion to the pomps, pride, and pageants of Court-life, was almost incredible. Many of her ladies of honor imitated her virtues, but they followed her at a considerable distance.

In fact, she was inimitable, above all, in the practice of humility, and in her zeal to seek out whatever was of the most revolting nature to the generality of women in her elevated position.

Wishing to bestow her greatest attentions on the sick, who labored under the most loathsome maladies, she made it her study to find them, that she might have the exclusive charge of their infirmities.

Her favourite virtue was to alleviate the sufferings of the poor; this was her habitual thought, and the holy passion that consumed her soul. Elizabeth justly deserved to be called the Mother of the Poor, and, to this day, the Church proposes her to us as the patroness of the poor. Such is one of the titles that she has on our veneration. In the persons of the poor, Elizabeth beheld Jesus Christ himself; and this was one of the reasons which

caused her to act as their most menial servant. One day—it was on Holy Thursday—she gathered together a vast number of the unfortunates who had been stricken with the leprosy, and nowise deterred by this horrid malady, so contagious, and so seldom yielding to human remedies, she washed the hands and feet of this loathsome assemblage, in imitation of our Lord, who, upon the eve of his crucifixion, washed the feet of his Apostles.

Being nowise restricted by her pious husband, there was no end to Elizabeth's alms-giving. In the year 1225, all Germany was afflicted by a terrible famine, and, at this period, Elizabeth seemed like an angel sent down from heaven to arrest this most direful scourge. The prince, her husband, was at this time in Italy, sustaining the Emperor, Frederick, the

Second, with his army. On his return, his principal officers, and the treasurers of his household, were loud in their protestations against the lavish profusion which they said Elizabeth had shown to the poor. But nothing could exceed their astonishment when the prince coldly asked them, if she had not carefully preserved the strong places of Thuringia? "Yes," replied the officers. "Well," observed the prince, "I will not dare to censure her charities, for they will bring down the benedictions of heaven on us; and I am certain I never shall want means as long as my wife continues to employ them so usefully, and so like a Christian woman, who, in her high position, does not forget herself or her God!"

Meanwhile, a crusade had been proclaimed against the Turks, the enemies of

Christ, and the enemies of civilization. Duke Louis, therefore, deemed it his bounden duty to respond to the summons of the Sovereign Pontiff, who was exhorting all the chivalry of Christendom to march to the succor of their oppressed brethren in the East.

Duke Louis, therefore, took the cross, and set out for Naples, where he was to join the Emperor Frederick, with whom he meant to pass into Palestine. Sad and painful was the parting from his holy wife. Bitter were the tears they shed, but religion resumed its empire, and at last triumphed over the feelings of nature.

The Landgrave having marched into Italy, proceeded to Otranto, where he was to have embarked with the Emperor Frederick. In that city he was attacked by an epidemic malady, then raging amongst

his troops. In fact, he was its first victim. He immediately demanded the sacraments of the Church, which were administered by the Patriarch of Jerusalem, and he soon afterwards expired in the most pious sentiments of a true Catholic. He was only twenty-seven years of age, and his loss was sincerely lamented by all his companions in arms.

The announcement of his decease filled Elizabeth's Court with grief and gloom. Her husband, her pious friend, he who called himself her brother: he with whom she had hoped to pass many a happy year, her Louis had departed to heaven from her, and she was never to see him again till God summoned her to His mansions of glory! "Ah!" she exclaimed, "since my brother is no longer here on this earth with me, I pray God that I may die to all things: henceforth

I can live only to weep and mourn."

That envy and hatred, which did not dare to show itself during Louis' lifetime, now joined in a league to ruin her. It was then alleged that Elizabeth had embarrassed the treasury by her almsgiving, that it was necessary to re-establish the exhausted finances, that Prince Hermann, son of the deceased Landgrave, was too young to take the reins of government, that some one capable of protecting the domains of the State should be selected, and they finally concluded that the only one fit for this important duty, was Henry, the uncle of Hermann.

The aristocracy succeeded in winning the sympathies of the populace, and Henry, therefore, seized the reins of government.

His first act was to expel Elizabeth from her palace, and his cruelty was so

excessive, that he refused her the very necessaries of life. Furthermore, he forbade all persons inhabiting his cities, to receive or succor her.

The princess suffered all these outrages and cruelties with admirable patience, and not a word of murmuring or repining ever fell from her lips.

Full of confidence in God, she departed tranquilly from her palace with her female servants, and took up her abode in a poor cottage. At midnight, she repaired to the church of the Franciscans, just as they were chanting matins, and then and there she invited them to join her in the *Te Deum*, for she desired to give thanks to God for the afflictions with which it pleased Him to visit her.

Next day she employed all diligence in seeking for some place where she might lodge, but no one dared to harbor

her, as all were in dread of the usurper and his supporters. She, therefore, had to spend the whole day in the church of the Franciscan friars.

In the night-time her children were brought to her, for Henry drove them out of the palace. On beholding the poor babes, now deprived of all maintenance, she could not check the current of her tears. Oh! how she then lamented the decease of their father. The caresses of the poor little creatures were not sufficient to console that afflicted mother; but she lifted up her eyes to heaven, and she, the daughter of kings, she whose alms, a few days ago, had succored the indigence and sufferings of so many, now humbly implored the King of heaven to look down compassionately on her and her tender charge. At all times full of confidence in God, Elizabeth

offered all her sufferings and humiliations to Him, and her most fervent prayer was that He would give her grace to live for Him alone, to fervently desire Him only: and God did come to her aid. An abbess, who was her kinswoman, offered her an asylum in her monastery. The Bishop of Bamberg, her uncle, presented her with a mansion situated near his palace. The prelate, thinking that a new alliance was the only means by which she might be enabled to recover her own and children's rights, counselled her to marry again; but the Saint informed him, that after her husband's decease she had made a vow to remain a widow for the rest of her life, and that her only desire was to consecrate the remainder of her days to God alone.

During her sojourn in the states of the Bishop of Bamberg, the mortal remains of her husband were brought home from

Italy. Elizabeth then related to the knights who had accompanied her husband's mortal remains, the sad story of her sufferings. She besought them to plead her cause and that of her children, and to obtain justice for them and her from her brother-in-law.

She never accused him as the cause of the disgraceful treatment she had experienced, but attributed it all to the evil counsels to which he had given ear. The knights were deeply affected by the story of her misfortunes, and bound themselves by an oath to see her restored to all her rights and privileges. Such was the ardor they evinced in this matter, that Elizabeth felt herself bound to moderate their zeal.

On their arrival in Thuringia, the nobles energetically reproached Prince

Henry with the disloyalty of his conduct. "Remember," said they to him, "that there is a God who sees all things. What crime has this woman committed? Is not the weakness of her sex quite enough to prevent her undertaking any emprise injurious to the State? Know you not that she is distinguished for her wonderful piety and many inestimable virtues? What have her children, your own blood, done to you? Ought not their age plead in their favor? You, who should have been their protector, have proved yourself their unrelenting enemy. Have you not violated all laws, human and divine?"

Henry's heart could not withstand such well-deserved reproaches. Sorrowful for his past conduct, and softened by the tears shed by the princesses themselves, he consented that Elizabeth

should return to the palace, promised to make restitution of all her property, and swore that he would resign the reins of government to her son as soon as he had attained his majority.

The knights being fully satisfied with these promises, brought back Elizabeth to her palace. Henry then caused her to be treated with all the honors due to her rank, and put her in possession of all her property.

After so many painful vicissitudes, Sophia, her mother-in-law, flattered herself that Elizabeth would renounce that manner of life which had brought so many afflictions on her; but Elizabeth's hatred of vanities became more intense, and she proved still more devoted to that God, who consoled her in all her afflictions —to that God who never deserted her when she was abandoned by all those

who fawned on her in the days of her prosperity.

Now that she had experience of bitter poverty, she became more attached to the poor, and to them she gave all the revenues arising from her dowry. For them she subjected herself to all manner of humiliations, such as mendings their clothes, and ministering to them with her own hands.

In vain did the King of Hungary, her father, strive to induce her to return to his Court. She refused to re-enter that world, which she had quitted for ever. She continued to live in the most perfect poverty, eating nothing but bread and herbs, and living only to pray. She, with her own hands, dressed the ulcers of the poor, and made herself an entire sacrifice to the suffering members of JESUS CHRIST.

At last the moment came in which the holy Duchess of Thuringia was to go to receive the glorious reward of all her sufferings and sorrows. Knowing that her end was approaching, although her malady was very slight, she redoubled her devout exercises, and the fire of her holy fervor grew stronger. Before receiving the sacraments, she desired to make a general confession of her whole life; and even to her last gasp, she ceased not to meditate on the mysteries of the life and sufferings of her divine Redeemer.

At length, after addressing many words, replete with piety and edification, to those who surrounded her, she expired in the night of the 19th of November, 1231, aged only twenty-four years. A great many miracles were wrought at her tomb. Four years after her death (A. D. 1235), she was canonized by Pope Gregory IX.

Her children were still young, and for a long time were enabled to honor the relics of their mother, which were exposed to the veneration of the faithful.

PRAYER.

O holy Elizabeth! what an example hast thou given us, that we may learn to despise the grandeur and riches of this transitory world! How admirable was thy love of the poor! How beautiful thy resignation in all thy sufferings and adversities! Oh, obtain for us from God a perfect renunciation of all things that tend not to his glory.....Great Saint, obtain for us humility, charity, love of humiliations, and of the cross! Holy Elizabeth, pray for us. Amen.

THE LIFE

OF

SAINT DYMPNA,

VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

THE LIFE

OF

SAINT DYMPNA

VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

In the seventh century there lived a holy maiden named Dympna, who at the earliest dawning of reason, vowed that she would consecrate herself entirely to God. She was of royal lineage, excelling all her compeers in the comeliness of her person, and highly educated as became her exalted position.

On the decease of her mother, her father who was a pagan, so shocked the sensitiveness of this Christian maiden by his brutality, that she resolved to leave

home and kindred for some quiet retreat where she might be at liberty to serve God according to the dictates of her religion and conscience. A priest named Genebrard, who had baptized Dympna, counselled her to fly from Ireland, and she accordingly fled to Antwerp, and thence to the village of Gheel, in Brabant, ten leagues distant from Antwerp. Genebrard accompanied her in her flight, and had the blessedness of sharing the glories of her martyrdom. Here they found all they desired, a safe refuge from the king's viciousness, and a secluded spot not far from the church of St. Martin, where they held uninterrupted communion with their God. They passed their time in fasting and prayer, and the priest Genebrard daily repaired to the church of St. Martin to celebrate the holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

The king, meanwhile, infuriated by the escape of his daughter, determined to go in pursuit of her. Having vainly sought her in Ireland, he embarked for Antwerp, and there discovered that Dympna lay concealed in the neighborhood Having come to the place, the king solicited his daughter to return with him to Ireland; but Genebrard knowing his iniquitous designs, exhorted the holy virgin to give a deaf ear to his wicked importunities. The king and his followers then fell on Genebrard, and slew him with their swords. Thus did the holy priest receive the crown of martyrdom at the hands of the pagan king.

The monarch now renewed his expostulations with Dympna, earnestly imploring her to quit the land of the strangers for her own home, where he

promised that she should enjoy that regal state to which she was entitled.

But Dympna, aided by God's grace, withstood the seductive lives of the tempter, and reproached him with the cold-blooded murder of Genebrard, her protector and spiritual guide. Blinded by rage, and forgetting all the instincts of the paternal heart, the infuriated king commanded his attendants to kill his daughter. None of them, however, daring to imbrue their hands in her blood, he himself unsheathed his sword and smote the faithful virgin dead at his feet.

The king then left the bodies of Dympna and Genebrard a prey to the birds of the air, till the clergy and people assembled to give them honorable sepulture. Numerous miracles wrought at the tombs of the holy martyrs, bore testimony to the sanctity of Dympna and Gene-

brard who have ever since been piously venerated by the inhabitants of Brabant. Their relics are now preserved in a rich shrine at Gheel, having been translated by the bishop of Cambray on the 15th of May.

The martyrdom of Dympna and Genebrard occurred in the year of our Lord, 600, and in the fifteenth year of Dympna's age.

The tomb of St. Dympna became a pilgrimage, and a church was soon erected in her honor around which grew up the town of Gheel. Her shrine was visited daily, and it was chiefly the insane and idiotic who sought the protection and intercession of Saint Dympna; while her relics are preserved in a costly silver chase given by a Dutch family, one of whose members was restored to health after a novena at her shrine.

The family of de Merode have also, in gratitude for the favors received, been great benefactors of the Church.

To this day the Church of St. Dympna is the resource of the insane; and the treatment of those bereft of reason, at Gheel, has made it a source of wonder throughout the world.

This noble Irish Virgin will not turn a deaf ear to the prayers of those families similarly afflicted, who appeal to her from any quarter of the globe.

PRAYER.

Oh God! thou lover of purity, grant that we who invoke the intercession of Thy holy martyr Dympna, may obtain the assistance of her merits and suffrages through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE LIFE
OF
SAINT WENEFRIDE,
VIRGIN AND MARTYR.

HER father, whose name was Thevith, was very rich, and one of the prime nobility in Wales, being son to Eluith, the chief magistrate, and second man in the kingdom of North Wales, next to the king. Her virtuous parents desired above all things to bring her up in the fear of God, and to preserve her soul untainted amidst the corrupt air of the world. About that time St. Benno, a holy priest and monk, who is said to have been maternal uncle to our Saint,

having founded certain religious houses in other places, came and settled in that neighborhood. Thevith rejoiced at his arrival, gave him a spot of ground free from all burden or tribute to build a church on, and recommended his daughter to be instructed by him in Christian piety. When the holy priest preached to the people, Wenefride was placed at his feet, and her tender soul eagerly imbibed his heavenly doctrine, and was wonderfully affected with the great truths which he delivered, or rather which God addressed to her by his mouth. The love of the sovereign and infinite good growing daily in her heart, her affections were quite weaned from all things of this world: and it was her earnest desire to consecrate her virginity by vow to God, and, instead of an earthly bridegroom, to choose Jesus Christ for her

spouse. Her parents readily gave their consent, shedding tears of joy, and thanking God for her holy resolution. She first made a private vow of virginity in the hands of St. Benno, and some time after received the religious veil from him, with certain other pious virgins, in whose company she served God in a small nunnery which her father had built for her, under the direction of St. Benno, near Holy-Well. After this St. Benno returned to the first monastery which he had built at Clunnock or Clynog Vaur, about forty miles distant, and there soon after slept in our Lord. His tomb was famous there in the thirteenth century. St. Benno founded Clunnock Vaur, a monastery of white monks, in a place given him by Guithin, uncle to one of the princes of North Wales. His name occurs in the English Martyrology.

After the death of St. Benno, St. Wenefride left Holy-Well, and after putting herself for a short time under the direction of St. Deifer, entered the nunnery of Gutherin in Denbighshire, under the direction of a very holy abbot called Elerius, who governed there a double monastery. After the death of the abbess Theonia, St. Wenefride was chosen to succeed her. Leland speaks of St. Elerius as follows: "Elerius was anciently, and is at present, in esteem among the Welsh. I guess that he studied at the banks of the Elivi where now St. Asaph's stands. He afterwards retired into the deserts. It is most certain that he built a monastery in the vale of Cluide, which was double, and very numerous of both sexes. Amongst these was the most noble virgin Guenvrede, who had been educated by Benno, and

who suffered death, having her head cut off by the furious Caradoc."

She is said to have been raised to life by the prayers of St. Benno. In all monuments and calendars she is styled a martyr; all the accounts we have of her agree that Caradoc or Cradoc, son of Alain, prince of that country, having violently fallen in love with her, gave way so far to his passion, that finding it impossible to extort her consent to marry him, in his rage he one day pursued her, and cut off her head, as she was flying from him to take refuge in the church which St. Benno had built at Holy-Well. Others add, that Cradoc was swallowed up by the earth upon the spot; secondly, that in the place where the head fell, the wonderful well which is seen there sprang up, with pebble stones and large parts of the rock in the bottom stained

with red streaks, and with moss growing on the sides under the water, which renders a sweet fragrant smell; and thirdly, that the martyr was raised to life by the prayers of St. Benno, and bore ever after a mark of her martyrdom, by a red circle on her skin about her neck.

At St. Wenefride's well, commonly called Holy-Well, such vast quantities of water spring constantly without intermission or variation, that above twenty-six tuns are raised every minute, for, if the water be let out of them, the basin and well, which contain at least two hundred and forty tuns, are filled in less than ten minutes. The water is so clear that though the basin is above four feet deep, a pin is easily perceived lying at the bottom. The spring head is a fine octagon basin, twenty-nine feet two inches in length, twenty-seven feet four inches

in breadth, and eighteen feet two inches high, and is covered with a chapel. The present exquisite Gothic building was erected by Henry VII, and his mother, the Countess of Richmond and Derby. The ceiling is curiously carved, and ornamented with coats of arms, and the figures of Henry VII, his mother, and the Earl of Derby. Those who desire to bathe descend by twenty steps into the area under the chapel; but no one can bathe there in the spring head, the impetuosity with which the water springs up, making it too difficult: hence the bathers descend by two circular staircases under a larger arch into the bath, which is a great basin forty-two feet long, fourteen feet seven inches broad, with a handsome flagged walk round.

Nor will any one deny that there are great natural qualities in many of those

Holy-Wells. Nevertheless, in the use of natural remedies, we ought by prayer always to have recourse to God, the Almighty physician. And it is undoubted that God is pleased often to display also a miraculous power in certain places of public devotion, and where the relics and other pledges of saints or holy things render him more propitious, as in the Probatica pond, *John*, v. 2, &c. Thus St. Augustine, ordering his clergy at Hippo to send a priest named Boniface, to pray in a certain church celebrated for holy relics, said: "God who created all things is in all places, and is every where to be adored in spirit and in truth. But who can explore the holy order of his providence, in dispensing his gifts, why these miracles should be done in some places and not in others? The sanctity of the place where the body of the blessed Felix

of Nola is buried, is well known. And we ourselves know the like at Milan. All the saints have not the gift of healing nor the discernment of spirits; so neither does it please him who distributes his gifts according to his holy will, that such things be performed in all the *memorials* or chapels of the saints." Perhaps no pilgrimage in the North was for some ages more famous than that of Holy-Well, where the divine mercy was implored through the intercession of her who in that place had glorified His name and sanctified her soul. Many cures of corporal distempers, there wrought, are proved by several circumstances to have been miraculous. Some of them were performed through the devotion of persons at a distance from the place, mentioned in the life of this saint; and such as certainly cannot have been produced by imagination.

If these authors, who lived a long time after the days of Saint Wenefride, were by some of their guides led into any mistakes in any of these circumstances, neither the sanctity of the martyr nor the devotion of the place can be thereby made liable to censure. St. Wenefride died on the 22d of June, as the old panegyric preached on her festival, and several of her lives, testify: the most ancient life of this Saint places her death, or rather her burial, at Guthurin on the 24th of June. The words are: "The place where she lived with the holy virgins was called Guthurin, where sleeping, on the eighth before the calends of July, she was buried, and rests in the Lord." Her festival was removed to the 3d of November, probably on account of some translation; and in 1391, Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, with his clergy in convo-

cation assembled, ordered her festival to be kept on that day throughout his province with an office of nine lessons, which is inserted in the Saurum Breviary. The time when this Saint lived is not mentioned in any of her lives; most, with Alford and Cressy, think it was about the close of the seventh century. Her relics were translated from Guthurin to Shrewsbury in the year 1138, and deposited with great honor in the Church of the Benedictine Abbey which had been founded there without the walls, in 1083, by Roger Earl of Montgomery. Herbert, abbot of that house, procured the consent of the diocesan, the Bishop of Bangor, and caused the translation to be performed with great solemnity, as is related by Robert, then prior of that house, who mentions some miraculous cures performed on that occasion to which he was eye-witness.

The shrine of this Saint was plundered at the dissolution of monasteries.

Several miracles were wrought through the intercession of this Saint at Guthurin, Shrewsbury, and especially at Holy-Well. To instance some examples: Sir Roger Bodenham, Knight of the Bath, after he was abandoned by the ablest physicians and the most famous colleges of that faculty, was cured of a terrible leprosy by bathing in this miraculous fountain in 1606; upon which he became himself a Catholic, and gave an ample certificate of his wonderful cure signed by many others. Mrs. Jane Wakeman of Sussex, in 1630, brought to the last extremity by a terrible ulcerated breast, was perfectly healed in one night by bathing thrice in that well, as she and her husband attested. A poor widow of Kidderminster, in Worcestershire, had been long lame and bed-ridden,

when she sent a single penny to Holy-Well to be given to the first poor body the person should meet with there; and at the very time it was given at Holy-Well, the patient arose in perfect health at Kidderminster. This fact was examined and juridically attested by Mr. James Bridges, who was afterwards Sheriff of Worcester, in 1651. Mrs. Mary Newman had been reduced to a skeleton, and to such a decrepit state and lameness, that for eighteen years she had not been able to point or set her foot on the ground. She tried all helps in England, France, and Portugal, but in vain. At last she was perfectly cured in the very well whilst she was bathing herself the fifth time. Roger Wherstone, a Quaker near Bromsgrove, by bathing at Holy-Well was cured of an inveterate lameness and palsy; by which he was converted to the

Catholic faith. Innumerable such instances might be collected. Cardinal Baronius expresses his astonishment at the wonderful cures which the pious Bishop of St. Asaph's, the pope's vicegerent for the episcopal functions at Rome, related to him as an eye-witness. Coming down nearer our own times, we will here insert an account of another miraculous cure, attested by the Right Rev. Dr. Milner, Bishop of Castaballa and Vicar Apostolic of the Midland District, who entered into a regular and detailed investigation of the matter, and published the result of his inquiries, together with the authentic documents he obtained from the professional gentleman who attended the young woman, as to the state of her disorder, and from those who witnessed the suddenness and efficacy of the cure. For the satisfaction of the reader, we give the following relation of

this surprising instance of the goodness of God towards those afflicted but humble mortals, who place their confidence in him, and beg the supplications of his holy saints, who have especially devoted their lives to his service :—

"Wenefride White (says the venerable prelate), being interrogated by me concerning her late disorder, and the cure of it, solemnly declares on her word, and is willing, if necessary, to confirm by her oath, that she had been for several years in a very infirm state of health ; but that for the last three years and more, previous to her going to Holy-Well, she had been utterly incapable of doing her work as a servant. She says, the first signal effect of her disorder was a violent pain in her left side, which afterwards extended itself to the left hip, and to the back-bone. She describes the said hip and the left leg,

as seeming to fall out of its place in consequence of the stretching of the sinews belonging to it; so that when she attempted to move, she was forced to drag the leg after her. She says that the back-bone was frequently swelled, particularly in the upper and lower parts of it, to relieve which, sometimes blisters, and at other times poultices, were applied. These occasioned a great discharge of matter, as did also two issues which were made in her back, one on each side of the bone, and kept open for several months. She says, the pain in the back-bone, and thence up to her head, was most violent; and during the last year and a half of her malady, uninterrupted; so that she was under the greatest apprehension of losing her senses, and frequently prayed to God that this misfortune might not befal her. Sometimes when she was a little better,

she could walk with the help of a stick, or even for a short time without one; but she was never free from the violent pain and weakness above described. At other times she was unable to move herself at all, and was accordingly carried to and from bed, like a new-born infant. Once she continued in this state of universal debility for six weeks together; still the principal seat of her pain, she says, was the back-bone and the left side. After recovering a little from the last-mentioned severe fit, she began to use a crutch, with which she supported herself, and dragged on her left leg, using it under the corresponding arm. But this arm soon failing and becoming too weak to hold a crutch, and sometimes even a handkerchief, or to be raised by her to her head, she was forced to hobble on (when she could move herself at all) with the crutch

under her right arm, and thus drag on her whole left side as if it had been dead.

"In this helpless and hopeless situation, having frequently heard Dr. Underhill and Mr. Stubbs declare that medicines could do her no good, and that her disorder was incurable, she thought of applying to Almighty God for supernatural relief, as she had read and heard of many miraculous cures, that had been performed by his power and goodness, at Holy-Well in Flintshire, through the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Wenefride, and she felt a strong inclination to get herself conveyed thither. But, on the other hand, being apprehensive of getting rid of a cross which might be intended for her sanctification and salvation, she says she determined not to do, nor even to wish for anything regarding this matter,

but in conformity with the advice of her spiritual director. She therefore first applied for counsel to the Rev. Mr. Walsh, and afterwards, at his desire, to the Rev. Mr. Blount who having inquired into the motive that induced her to wish for a cure for her malady, approved of them, and consented to her undertaking the journey. She therefore set off from Wolverhampton, as soon afterwards as she could get herself ready, with an humble confidence that God was both able and willing to work a miracle in her behalf, as well as He had done in favor of so many others. This confidence, she says, she expressed to some of her friends before she set off. She left Wolverhampton on the 25th of June, by the stage coach, and reached Chester on the evening of the 26th, whence she got a conveyance, the same night, by a returned post chaise, belonging to Mr.

Price, of the White Horse, to Holy-Well, where she arrived very early the ensuing morning. She said she suffered extremely during the journey, and upon her arrival at Holy-Well; so that she began to apprehend the fears which her mistress had expressed of her not returning home alive, would prove to be true.

"The next morning, the 28th of June, about seven o'clock, having performed those daily acts of devotion which she had continued ever since she had resolved to visit Holy-Well, at the house where she lodged in Well street, kept by Mrs. Humphreys, she crawled down, with great difficulty, to what is called St. Wenefride's Well, in company with a Mrs. Midghall and the two Mrs. Promleys, ladies who had arrived from Liverpool at Holy-Well the same day that she did. One of the latter, she says, was so charitable as to assist

her in bathing. She describes the effect of the water, upon her being immersed into it, as so much surprising and overpowering her, that she was unable to recollect herself or attend to the state of her health, till she began to change her bathing dress in an adjoining cabin, belonging to a Mrs. Needham, who attends at the well, when she found herself able to stand upon her left leg as firm as upon her right leg, and that the excruciating pains at her back, and her other pains and maladies, had quite left her: in a word, that she was in every respect perfectly well. She says, that remaining a fortnight longer at Holy-Well, she bathed two or three times more, in compliance with custom, and to satisfy the importunity of her friends, but without any sensible benefit to her health, as in fact, she was perfectly cured at her first bathing, and

enabled to walk, run, or work, as well as ever. From Holy-Well she went to Puddington, in Cheshire, where she had acquaintance, and from thence to Chester, where she was detained several days by her friends, so that it was about a month from the time of her cure till her reaching home. She adds, that she has never had any return of her former disorders, pains, or weaknesses, since the day of her cure, viz., the 28th day of June, 1805.

"This declaration having been read over to the undersigned, she hereby testifies the truth of it."

"WENEFRIDE WHITE."

PRAYER.

Almighty and everlasting God, we humbly beseech Thee that blessed St. Wenefride may obtain for us such spiritual

and temporal benefits as are expedient for Thy holy service and our eternal salvation. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who with Thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth for ever one God, world without end. Amen.

THE LIFE

OF THE

BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

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A Redeemer had been promised to fallen man. The Word of God himself was to become man, to redeem us, and it was in a virgin's womb that this great mystery was to be operated. The time fixed by the prophets for this work of love had now arrived.

Therefore, in the year after the creation of the world, 3985, or thereabouts, and as is generally believed, on the 8th of September, there was born in Nazareth, a small town of Galilee, this most blessed Virgin, who was destined to give birth to the Redeemer of men, the Messias whom all the ages awaited. Joachim,

her father, descended from the race of David, and Anne, her mother, sprung from the priestly family of Aaron, had miraculously obtained this child after twenty years' sterility.

This most blessed Virgin, the future mother of the Sun of Justice, was adorned with all the attributes of grace, and from the moment of her conception, no stain, even of original sin, ever tarnished her purity. Even the very day of her nativity has been inscribed amongst the number of the solemnities of the Church, while with the Saints the Church generally commemorates only the day of their death.

This child so peculiarly favored by God, received the mysterious name of Mary, which in Hebrew, signifies "STAR OF THE SEA." St. Bernard observes, that the Mother of Christ could not have re-

ceived a name more suited to her destiny. "Mary," says he, "is that brilliant star which shines upon the vast and stormy sea of the world."

Twenty-four days after Mary's birth, Anne, in obedience to the law of Moses regarding purification, repaired to the Temple, and there made the usual offering, which consisted of a lamb or, from the poor, two turtle doves.

But the gratitude of Anne exceeded this; she offered to the Lord a purer victim; she devoted to the service of the holy place the infant whom the Most High had given her; and she solemnly promised to bring her child to the Temple, and there to consecrate her as soon as her young reason could discern good and evil. When the ceremony had terminated, the two spouses retraced their steps homewards; but three years had scarcely passed when the pious

mother brought her daughter back. In this infant of blessedness, reason had scarcely a dawning; it beamed forth brilliantly at an age when other children scarcely know their right hand from the left. Beyond doubt, the sacrifice which these parents were about to make, cost them much. She was their only child, the sweet crown of their old age, their consolation and delight; but they were animated by the Spirit from above. Anne and Joachim preferred what was due to God to their own gratification.

Mary's father and mother, therefore, proceeded to Jerusalem, and in the midst of the imposing solemnities of the feast of the Dedication, presided over by the high priest, Zachary, deposited within the sacred precincts of the Temple the child of grace, the precious treasure that had been given to them by the God of Israel.

From that moment Mary was numbered amongst the young virgins attached to the service of the Temple, and who were brought up in the holy place, far from the noise of the world and the gaze of the wicked. An azure-colored robe, a white tunic fastened by a cincture, and a long veil, was the costume of Mary and her companions in the Temple. The virgins rose at break of day, at the hour when the *wicked angels are dumb*, says a pious author, *and when prayers are heard most favorably*. They chanted the Psalms night and morning in the sanctuary; during the day their fingers plied the cedar spindles; they worked either at gold or fine wool, and they embroidered or executed designs rivalling the fabrics of Sidon. Mary, superior to all her companions in the various pursuits, excelled them likewise in spinning. The popular traditions, faith-

ful to this remembrance, appropriately term the white tissues of vapors suspended over the fields in the sunset of autumn, "the Virgin's threads."

Mary had passed nine years near the holy tabernacles, when she lost her aged father, who died blessing his child. A little while afterwards Anne also died. Mary, now an orphan, and bereft of all that she loved on earth, turned her thoughts undivided to the things of God. She chose God for her sole heritage, and she devoted herself to the service of his altar, with the intention of never quitting the holy place. Like the august chief of her race, Mary found that one day spent in the tabernacles of the God of Israel was preferable to a thousand days elsewhere, and she would rather have been the least in this holy place than the most honored in the tents of Cedar.

It is thus that the Blessed Virgin, who should be a model to all ages and to all the conditions of life, presents to the world, from her tenderest years, an example of that religious life which is not marked by any one distinguishing virtue, because it is an assemblage of all virtues. Above all things, Mary cultivated that virginity which Jesus Christ was to teach to the world; nay, she vowed herself to it before the Savior of the world had preached its advantages, or enunciated precepts concerning it. Before the paths had been traced, or the way opened, Mary's love served her for a master, and her heart acted as her guide. Excited and animated by grace, she was able to practise virtues till that moment unknown.

After the death of her parents, Mary was placed under guardians whose names have not reached us. In all probability they were of the sacerdotal race, since she

belonged to the family of Aaron, by her mother's side. "If we be permitted to hazard a conjecture," says the Abbe Orsini, "we would say, it is likely that the charge of her education was particularly confided to the husband of Elizabeth, the high reputation of whose virtue and close kindred would seem to have marked him out for these protecting offices. The intense love that caused the Blessed Virgin, two or three years afterwards, to traverse all Judea that she might offer her congratulations to the mother of St. John the Baptist, and her protracted sojourn in the mountains of Hebron, seem to denote relations more than those of simple kindred. The roof that sheltered Mary during such a long visit could not have been, according to the usages rigorously observed by the Jews, less sacred than the paternal home."

Whosoever these guardians were, they

soon determined to give their pupil a spouse worthy of her. Mary was then, according to the common opinion, about fifteen or sixteen years of age. Cardinal Cajetan thinks that she must have been at the least twenty-two years old.

This projected marriage alarmed the young virgin. She would have resisted it; but sterility being then looked upon as a disgrace, and her vow of virginity becoming null by the sole will of the family council, Mary must needs obey. Her suitors presented themselves, and of them all the lot fell upon a poor carpenter of Nazareth, a man advanced in years (aged about fifty years), and who, although of the noble race of David, earned his bread by the sweat of his brow. An ancient tradition, given by St. Jerome, and preserved in the history of Mount Carmel, relates, that the suitors, after beseeching

Him who presides over men's destinies, deposited in the night time their almond wands in the Temple, and that on the next day the withered and dead wand of Joseph was found verdant and flourishing, like that which, in ages long gone, had secured the priesthood to the family of Aaron.

Such was the man chosen by God to be, in the eyes of men, the spouse of Mary, but in the eyes of heaven, the protector and guardian of her virginity. The humble Joseph received Mary in his poor home, and as a profound admirer of the virtues of his spouse, he respected her as the ark of the Lord, nay, as the temple of Jehovah. Mary, bidding adieu to the cedar and gold of the Temple, the consecrated perfumes, the psaltery of lyres and harps, and to all the brilliant and beauteous occupations of the holy place, clothed herself with indigence as a robe

of honor, and gave herself without murmuring to all the fatiguing cares of her poor household. And why should not the pious Mary love Joseph?—by what countless cares should she not prove her gratitude to him, since her virginity, that treasure so dear to her heart, found such sure and holy protection beneath the shade of his virtues?

About two months had passed over the heads of these chaste spouses in the house of Nazareth, where they led the most holy life that heaven ever beheld, when the hour destined for the world's salvation came, that hour so often announced by the Pophets of Israel, and so long expected by the nations. Let us hear the evangelical historian: "And in the sixth month, the Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth to a virgin espoused to a man whose name

was Joseph, of the house of David: and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women. Who having heard was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said to her: Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father: and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever."—St. Luke, i. 26–32.

Mary, not being able to comprehend these strange words, manifestly contradicting the vow of virginity she had made

in the Temple of the Lord, grew more astonished. She then says to the angel, with simplicity, "How shall this be done?" And the angel answering, said to her; "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren; because no word shall be impossible with God."–St. Luke, i. 35–37. Mary, then annihilated before the divine decrees, replies, with the most sincere humility, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word." And the angel disappeared. "And the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt amongst us." "Let us go no further into

this mystery," says St. John Chrysostom, "nor let us ask how the Holy Ghost could operate this miracle in the Virgin. This divine generation is a profound abyss that no curious searching can fathom."

Meanwhile, the Blessed Virgin being informed by the angel of the miraculous pregnancy of St. Elizabeth, believed it her duty to go and offer her congratulations. The distance between Nazareth and the town of Hebron, where dwelt the Blessed Virgin's relative, the spouse of Zachary, was about a hundred and fifteen or twenty miles; nevertheless she did not hesitate, but traversed the mountains of Judea, and at length arrived in the city of Juda. Being conducted to the house of Zachary, she entered, and saluting Elizabeth, said to her, "Peace be with thee." At the sound of Mary's voice, the precursor of the Messias leaped with joy in his mother's

womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the spirit of prophecy, exclaimed, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord." Mary answered her, and pronounced the admirable canticle (Magnificat)—an eternal monument of her humility and gratitude; "A canticle more replete," says an ancient writer, "*with mysteries than words;* a glorious picture of Providence, which raises up the humble, casts down the proud, and confounds the powerful, in order to protect the weak, and satisfy the indigent:"

My soul doth magnify the Lord.

And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.

For he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid: for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

For he that is mighty hath done great things unto me, and holy is his name.

And his mercy is from generation to generation unto them that fear him

He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

He hath put down the mighty from their seats: and hath exalted the humble.

He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent empty away.

He hath upholden his servant Israel: being mindful of his mercy.

As he spake unto our fathers: to Abraham and his seed for ever.

After staying three months with her

venerable cousin, Mary returned to Nazareth. At that moment, Joseph, who was a just man full of charity and veneration for the virtues of Mary, felt himself a prey to cruel perplexities. He therefore resolved to dismiss Mary. Whilst this thought occupied him, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, and said to him, "Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son: and thou shalt call his name Jesus. For he shall save his people from their sins." On awaking from his sleep, Joseph profoundly adored the admirable ways of Providence, and all his doubts were dissipated.

And now the solemn moment when the heavens were to rain down the Just One had arrived. Oh, mountain of Sion, leap with joy! A Virgin Mother, a Virgin

excelling all the daughters of men in blessedness, is about to give to the world the Expected of the Nations!

An edict of Augustus Cæsar, then master of the world, ordered a general census of the inhabitants of the earth. Every one was obliged to go to the town from which his family sprung, to be enrolled; wherefore these holy spouses, who descended from David, notwithstanding the inclemency of the season, and the Blessed Virgin's tender condition, set out for Nazareth, and after a journey of five days, at length reached Bethlehem.

The inns were full; they sought shelter, but they found it not. The fatigue of the young virgin could not inspire compassion. Night fell; the spouses quitted the inhospitable city, sought refuge in a deserted cavern—a place

which was frequented by the shepherds of Bethlehem in the stormy nights. There they rested, thanking heaven for this comfortless asylum; and there it was, in the silence of the midnight, that the Virgin brought forth the Christ expected for forty centuries, the Messiah, the Son of God, in all things equal to God, who deigned to come down into our valley of tears to renew the face of the earth, to heal and to restore; and this King of kings, this Divine Legislator, this Lord of the world, this Pastor promised to the children of Israel, now reposes on humid straw in a miserable manger. "Ah!" exclaims St. Bernard, "Ah! Mary, carefully conceal the splendor of this new Sun, lay him in the manger, cover him with his scanty clothing; that poor clothing is our wealth, the rude clothing of my Savior is more precious than purple, and the

manger is more glorious than the thrones of kings." Oh! what must have been Mary's joy at that moment! Let us hear St. Basil: "How shall I call thee?" exclaims the daughter of the Patriarchs, while she bends over the infant God. A mortal?—but thou hast been conceived by a Divine operation. A God?—but thou hast a human body! Ought I come to thee with incense, or offer thee my milk?—ought I bestow on thee a mother's cares, or, with forehead bowed to the dust, serve thee as thy slave?"

"And there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night-watches over their flock. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them: Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings

of great joy, that shall be to all the people: For this day is born to you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will."—Luke, ii. 8–14.

The angels retired, the celestial psalmody ceased, and the enraptured shepherds listened, till they heard only the night winds sweeping through the valley. They then took counsel of each other and said —"Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us". And they came with haste; and they found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the

manger. And seeing, they understood of the word that had been spoken to them concerning this. And all that heard wondered: and at those things that were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."—St. Luke, ii. 15–20.

Thus, for his first temple, under heaven, the Man-God had a stable.... It was there that he was circumcised, the eighth day after his nativity. As he should receive a name then, he was called Jesus, which signifies Savior; for he came to save all men.

It was in the stable that our poor God received the adoration of the shepherds of Judea, the first representatives of Israel; it was also in a stable that God,

who came to save mankind, received the adoration of the princes of the East, the royal first fruits of converted Heathenism.

Forty days after this marvellous nativity of the Savior of mankind, the humle Virgin conceals the splendor of her spotless purity and the divine privilege of her virginal maternity under the sombre veils a humiliating ceremony prescribed by the law of Moses, and obligatory on every woman who had brought forth a child.

Although always a virgin, the chaste spouse of the Holy Ghost goes, as it were, to cleanse her from a stain which she had never contracted, and to join the other women of Israel in the legal purification. She presents the infant God in the Temple of Jerusalem, and likewise the two doves that should be offered in sacrifice. Here the future was unveiled to her eyes,

to the eyes of her whom all nations shall call blessed, but whom all nations shall style Queen of Martyrs. Magnificent and brilliant words, it is true, fell from the prophetic lips of the aged Simeon: the child of Mary was to be a light to the nations and the glory of Israel; but he was also to be a mark for the perversity of man, and the soul of his mother was to be *transpierced by the sword of sorrow.*

Mary was saddened by these words, but she gladly accepted everything that came from God.

After this ceremony the two spouses returned to Nazareth; but they have scarcely arrived when an angel from heaven orders Joseph to take the child and his mother and fly into Egypt, for Herod sought the child to slay him.

The Wise Men who came from the East and sought the child, awakened

Herod's alarm. Herod thought that in a little while one far more potent than himself, would come to deprive him of his throne; he therefore determined to murder the child in his cradle; and to be assured of his victim, he massacred all the children of Bethlehem from two years old and under. But God will save the infant from the sword of the tyrant, and he shall live to offer himself a sacrifice on Calvary.

The angel's words terrified the hearts of Joseph and Mary: they fly by night, and pass into Egypt over roads unknown to them, and over deserts, in the midst of a thousand privations; but with them they have Jesus, and this treasure consoles them in all their sorrows, and for love of Jesus they resignedly endure all the afflictions of exile, despised as poor foreigners, by the haughty unbelievers

of the land. About seven years afterwards, Herod being dead, Joseph, having received another admonition from the angel, brought back the mother and infant out of the land of exile.

The humble carpenter applied himself to his trade, the Virgin employed herself with her household duties, and Jesus, though still young, worked with his hands and assisted his poor foster father. This life of labor and meditation, this life which was so toilsome, and at the same time so interior and so perfect, this mysterious existence of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph under the humble roof of Nazareth, has remained hidden from the eyes of man.

All we know of it is, that when the Divine infant had attained his twelfth year, Mary and Joseph, who were strict observers of the Mosaic law, brought him

to Jerusalem for the feast of the Pasch. Here they lost him, and thinking that he was with some of their kindred or acquaintances, they were returning from the holy city, when they discovered their mistake. Extreme was their desolation: they hastened back, they sought him in all the streets of the city, and after lengthened inquiries found him in the Temple, seated in the midst of the doctors, astonishing them by his wisdom and answers. "Son, why hast thou done so to us?" asked his mother tenderly; "behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." Jesus answered: "How is is that ye sought me? did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" But they did not comprehend what he said. He then accompanied them, and remained at Nazareth subject to them. And his mother kept all these

words in her heart, and Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and man.

In these few words the Sacred Scriptures epitomize many years of our Savior's life. For a period of about eighteen years the Holy Family remains hidden from our eyes.

It is believed that our Lord was twenty-nine years of age when Joseph died: a most enviable death. After embracing his adopted Son, he departed this life, accompanied by the profound regrets of his loving child.

The Man-God is now about to commence his divine mission: he tears himself from the embraces of his holy Mother, quits Nazareth, and retires into the desert to prepare himself, by fasting and prayer, for the grand work of saving the world. After this Jesus dwells

a short while with Mary, to calm her anguish and console the troubled heart of that tender mother by his presence.

It was then that the marriage of Cana in Galilee was solemnized. The spouses were related to the Blessed Virgin. She was invited to the wedding, together with Jesus and his first disciples. The wine failed at the banquet: the spouses were confounded. Mary was the first to perceive their confusion and embarrassment; she turned to Jesus, and full of confidence and faith she said to him: "They have no wine." And she waited till the moment when her Son's interposition should become necessary. Jesus, unable to resist the charitable desires of his mother, works his first miracle at her instance, and changes the water contained in six stone urns into delicious wine.

The better to understand some passages

of Scripture in which Jesus seems to have spoken with apparent coldness to his mother, we deem it opportune to make the following few remarks:—None can doubt the extreme and profound tenderness with which Christ reciprocated the tenderness and affection of Mary. From her he had received existence and the blood that flowed in his veins: the blood that he was to offer in sacrifice on the cross to take away the sins of the world was the gift of Mary, and of Mary alone.

All the holy affections which the Lord of life implants in the soul of a child for those from whom it receives life—all those holy affections did our Lord Jesus concentrate in the person of his blessed Mother. As God and Man he loved this tender mother; of her he had taken flesh, and as God he loved her with a love transcending all that is earthly. This

was the only time in which the Divinity, who conferreth all good, found himself called upon to practise towards the creature the virtue of noble hearts, gratitude; and that of Jesus for Mary augmented in proportion to all the sacrifices, privations, and labors that this holy and noble Virgin underwent for love of him. If, therefore, we occasionally find in the Scriptures, that Christ sometimes spoke to his mother more like her Lord than her Son, it is not because he lacked affection, or that he was indifferent to her, but it is simply because he isolated himself from earthly things, that he might the better glorify his Father, whose interests were his primary consideration—interests of such superlative nature as to occupy wholly the soul of the Divine Redeemer. Mary was too deeply impressed with the conviction of

the sacred mission of her Son to be troubled at his words, if they sometimes seemed severe; she knew that the young Galilean whom she had nourished at her breast was to become the Legislator, and she knew full well that he would soon cause the miraculous transformation to take place; in a word, she was intimately persuaded that her divine Son would not fail to perform the miracle in favor of the guests, and at her request.

The Gospel, except on two occasions, does not make further mention of Mary, till the time of our Lord's passion. The first is when a woman, enraptured by the discourses of Jesus, exclaimed, "Blessed are the breasts that gave thee suck." But Jesus immediately replied, "Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it." Jesus wished thus publicly to congratulate Mary less for

being his mother, than for having merited this honor by her submission to the will of God. Behold, he seems to say to them, what you should imitate in my mother! The second occasion is, when some one came to Jesus whilst he was instructing the people, and said to him that his Mother was there; Jesus replied, looking round on his disciples, "My mother and my brethren are those who hear the Word of God and keep it."

This answer which, under other circumstances, might seem stern, was perfectly mysterious, and at the same time necessary, in relation to those who were listening to him. The Jews, to whom he was announcing the kingdom of heaven, regarded him as a mere man, and were accustomed to say, "Is not this the son of Joseph the carpenter?—Is not his mother called Mary?—are not

his relatives amongst us?" Our Savior, therefore, would have them regard him not as solely the son of Mary, but rather that they should recognize in his person the character of his divinity, which they would not, acknowledge, although he clearly manifested it by his words and works.

It is certain that Mary followed Jesus in all his journeys, and that she accompanied the holy women of whom the Scripture makes occasional mention, giving us to understand that they attached themselves to the person of the Divine Redeemer. How could we doubt this, when we find her following her Son amidst all his ignominies, standing at the foot of the cross, and mingling her tears with the blood of her Son? And, oh! during the three last years of the life of Jesus, how much had

her tender soul to suffer amidst every species of persecution and sorrows that man heaped upon her divine Son. But Mary was always filled with a holy resignation—always inspired with sentiments of entire subjection to God; nay, in the midst of all those tribulations, alarms, and insults, she proved herself to be the most perfect as well as the most admirable of mothers. "Mary," says a pious writer, "was not only a holy dove hiding herself in the crevices of the rock —a pure Virgin, chosen to feed with her milk, and cradle in her arms, a heavenly guest: she was likewise a valiant woman, whom the Lord was pleased to place in all the situations and trials of life, in order that the daughters of Eve might have an example to follow, and a model to imitate." In her hours of desolation, in the garden of Gethsemane, in the

judgment hall, and on Calvary, the mother of Jesus must have remembered the words of aged Simeon, and she must have felt the sword of grief piercing her soul. Oh! how truly might not that afflicted mother have exclaimed in these moments—"All ye who pass the way, come and see if there be grief like mine." O God! at this dread hour what a sacrifice didst thou demand from the Mother and Son!

At last the grand mystery of man's salvation approaches its completion: the august victim is on the altar. Jesus, overwhelmed with afflictions, has no more blood to shed, and is about to breathe his last gasp; it is then he addressed the last words to Mary; he bequeaths his mother to the well-beloved disciple, and the well-beloved disciple to his Mother: "Woman, behold thy son,"

and then, "John, behold thy mother." Such was the last proof of the immense love of Jesus for men. He left them Mary for a mother; for in the person of Saint John has he not called all mankind her children? and ever since then Mary has not ceased to employ her all-powerful intercession with Jesus Christ in our behalf, and to discharge for us all, just as well as sinners, the duties of the tenderest of mothers.

When the adorable body of Jesus was taken down from the cross, his holy Mother received it in her arms, and upon her knees was laid the bleeding and mutilated form of the Man-God. But, oh! what was her joy, when she beheld her Son and her God triumphing over the grave, and when, a little while afterwards, she assisted at his glorious ascension. Beholding the splendors of

heaven revealed to her eyes—beholding the ineffable glories of her Son, must not Mary have been the happiest of mothers?

The Scripture does not tell us that Jesus Christ appeared to his mother after his Resurrection; but who could doubt it? She was the last whom he named in the hour of his death; and surely, it is only reasonable to suppose that she was one of the first to whom he appeared after his Resurrection. After having accompanied him to Jerusalem with the apostles and holy women, she doubtless went with the former into Galilee, and then returned with them to Jerusalem, where, according to St. Luke, she remained from the moment of her Son's ascension till the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles.

When the promised Paraclete descended on the apostles, who persevered

unanimously in prayer, she too was present, thus becoming, as it were, the luminous column that guided the first steps of the new born Church.

The Holy Scriptures say nothing of the late years of Mary. It is thought that she retired for some years from Jerusalem, when the persecution broke out which (about the year 44) compelled the apostles to fly from the deicide city. It would appear that she went with her adopted son, St. John, to the city of Ephesus; and some authors are of opinion that she died there. The most commonly received opinion is, that she expired in Jerusalem, surrounded by the apostles and disciples of Jesus.

Hers was less a death than a tranquil sleep, in which the most perfect and most humble of creatures, the best-beloved daughter of the Heavenly Father,

the chaste spouse of the Holy Ghost, the devout Mother of the Son, quitted her long exile, to go and take her seat on a throne at the right hand of Jesus, eminently raised above all the elect and angels.

It is commonly believed that Mary died on the night of the 15th of August, in the forty-sixth year of our era. Others think that her death occurred in the fifth year of the reign of Claudius, *i. e.*, in the 798th year of Rome, or forty-fifth of the Christian era. Some say that she lived sixty-one years, others fifty-two, and others sixty-two; whilst some believe that she passed seventy-two years here below.

Whilst Jesus Christ was crowning his blessed Mother in heaven, constituting her queen of heaven and earth, the mourning apostles entombed her virginal body in Gethsemane.

Three days after her august obsequies, Thomas, who alone was absent at the time of her decease, returned from a distant region. He wished once more to contemplate the features of the Mother of Jesus, to gaze once more on the living ark of the Most High, on the tabernacle of the Word made Flesh. Thereon the sepulchre was opened; but according to St. John of Damascus, and the greater number of the Greek and Latin Fathers, the sacred body was not to be found. It had gone to be reunited to its holy soul, and to enjoy never-ending happiness. The most pure and immaculate body of the Virgin was not to be a prey to the corruption of the sepulchre; and according to the expression of the hymn sung on the Feast of the Assumption, "*Death was not to hold in its chains her who had given to the world the Author of life.*"

PRAYER.

O Virgin, abyss of perfections, imperishable treasure of graces! O Mary, our all-powerful Mother, thou hope of Christians, queen of angels and of the world! deign to watch over us on the perilous ways of our sad pilgrimage, and grant, we beseech thee, that we may be made partakers of the blessedness that thou art now enjoying in heaven. *Amen.*

THE LITANY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

Anthem.

We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God! despise not our prayers in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers, O thou ever glorious and blessed Virgin!

Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us.
Christ, hear us.
Christ, graciously hear us.
God, the Father of Heaven, *have mercy on us.*
God, the Son, Redeemer of the world, *have mercy on us.*
God, the Holy Ghost, *have mercy on us.*
Holy Trinity, one God, *have mercy on us.*
Holy Mary,
Holy Mother of God,
Holy Virgin of virgins,
Mother of Christ,
Mother of divine grace,
Most pure mother,
Most chaste mother,
Mother undefiled,
Mother inviolate,
Most amiable mother,
Most admirable mother,
Mother of our Creator,

Pray for us.

Mother of our Redeemer,
Most prudent virgin,
Most venerable virgin,
Most renowned virgin,
Most powerful virgin,
Most merciful virgin,
Most faithful virgin,
Mirror of justice,
Seat of wisdom,
Cause of our joy,
Spiritual vessel,
Honorable vessel,
Vessel of singular devotion,
Mystical rose,
Tower of David,
Tower of ivory,
House of gold,
Ark of the covenant,
Gate of Heaven,
Morning star,
Health of the weak,

Pray for us.

Refuge of sinners,
Comforter of the afflicted,
Help of Christians,
Queen of angels,
Queen of patriarchs,
Queen of prophets,
Queen of apostles,
Queen of martyrs,
Queen of confessors,
Queen of virgins,
Queen of all saints,
Pray for us.

Holy Mary, conceived without original sin,

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, *Spare us, O Lord!*

Lamb of God, who takest away the inss of the world, *Graciously hear us, O Lord!*

Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, *Have mercy on us, O Lord!*

Christ, hear us. Christ, graciously

hear us. Lord, have mercy on us. Christ, have mercy on us. Lord, have mercy on us.

Our Father, &c.

V. Pray for us, O holy Mother of God!

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

PRAYER.

Pour forth, we beseech thee, O Lord! thy grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ, thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may, by his passion and cross, be brought to the glory of his resurrection through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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SAINT
MARGARET